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## PART TWO

### *Poets, Philosophers, Priests: Entheogens in the Formation of the Classical Tradition*

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## CHAPTER SIX

### MUSHROOMS AND PHILOSOPHERS

Toward the end of Aristophanes' comedy, the *Birds*, Prometheus, the mythical figure who stole fire from the gods, arrives on stage, shielding himself from the view of his arch-enemy Zeus, the god directly overhead in the heavens, by hiding himself beneath the shade of a parasol. This episode of the comedy is completed by a dance in which the chorus of birds describes the philosopher Socrates in a swamp, where he is summoning up spirits from the dead in the company of a strange race of people called the 'Shade-foots'.

Amidst the Shade-foots, there is a certain swamp where Socrates, unwashed, summons up souls. Amongst his clients came Peisander, who begged to see a spirit that had forsaken him while he remained alive. He had a camel-lamb as victim for sacrifice, and, like Odysseus of old, he slit its throat, whereupon to him from the depths there came up toward the camel's trench a spirit, Chaerephon, the 'bat'.  
[lines 1553-1564]

Who were these Shade-foots amongst whom the famous Greek philosopher is supposed to be performing this rite of necromancy? They can be found still attending such rites in modern times and hence their identity may give us a key for understanding what Socrates was really doing.

### SHADE-FOOTS

The Shade-foots were said to be a grotesque tribe of people who had only a single leg with a broad webbed foot like that of geese. They customarily lay on their backs, protecting themselves from the heat of the sun by resting in the shade cast by their single, up-raised, parasol-like feet. At other times, however, they displayed extraordinary vigor, leaping up and down with prodigious strength on their solitary legs. We first hear of them in the sixth century B.C. from a traveler named Scylax, who, according to Herodotus (4.44), wrote a description of a trip down the Indus and thence along the coast to Suez in the reign of the Persian king, Darius I. Nothing remains of Scylax's book, but a fragment of another work from the end of the next century is still extant, in which they and their bizarre characteristics are again mentioned. This is a book by Ctesias (60 Jacoby), a Greek physician from Cnidos who served at the Persian

court and wrote an account of a similar voyage. Both of these early travelers claimed that India was the homeland of the Shade-foots.<sup>1</sup>

The tribe was called by other names as well. They appear to have been the same people that we hear of even earlier from the seventh-century poet Alcman, who knew them as 'Cover-foots' (148 Page). Another name, although Greek, is preserved only in Latin sources. The Shade-foots were also known as Monocoli or 'One-Legs' (Pliny, *Natural History* 7.2.23; Aulus Gellius 9.4.9).

This latter name is particularly interesting because when we find these people in modern times, they will be a particular plant involved in Asiatic shamanism. Monocoli in Greek was an epithet of plants (Theophrastus, *How Plants Grow* 2.25, *Enquiry into Plants* 9.18.8). In modern times, the prodigious strength of their single leg will also be remembered from ancient traditions.

## THE SCENE OF NECROMANCY

Before tracking them down today, however, we should look at the other details of the scene described by Aristophanes. Two other historical figures are also said to be present, Peisander and Chaerephon. The choice of these two is the point of the joke.

Chaerephon was the frequent and usually over-enthusiastic companion of Socrates. It was his impetuous consultation of the Delphic oracle that had elicited the famous response that Socrates was wiser than other men, an enigmatic

1. The real identity of the Shade-foots had become a futile topic for grammarians by the Christian era. Even as early as the fifth century, some people thought of them as African or Libyan (Antiphon 80 B 45 Diels; Archippus 53 Edmonds), and it was there that the scholars of the Hellenistic age placed them, for their parasol-like feet could be rationalized as a peculiar adaptation to the African heat, a bias that even endowed these poor suffering creatures eventually with the normal complement of limbs, the better to crawl about from exhaustion on all fours in the desert (scholia to Aristophanes' *Birds* 1553).

The valley of the Indus, however, must have been their original homeland, for that was the testimony of the earliest travelers, and even the fifth-century orator Antiphon, who thought they were Libyan, had apparently read of them

in our earliest source, the Indian travels of Scylax (Antiphon 80 B 47 Diels). The confusion between an Indian and African homeland for the Shade-foots is understandable in view of the map made by the sixth-century Hecataeus, who placed the Ethiopians in the East along the entire region bordering the sea that separates Africa from India. By the Hellenistic age, however, these 'African' Shade-foots were reinterpreted as living in what was then considered to be Africa, the torrid regions to the west of Alexandria.

In identifying the Shade-foots' homeland as the Indus valley, I follow Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexicon der Griechischen und Römischen Mythologie*, and differ from the judgement recorded in Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (see articles on 'Sciapodes').

reply that led to Socrates' life-long quest for someone wiser than himself, only at last to conclude that the oracle must have meant that all men are stupid, but that he alone knew it and thus, by that little bit, was wiser. We know of Chaerephon not only from the Platonic dialogues, but also from parodies of him in other comedies. He was an excitable and frenzied person (Plato, *Apology* 21a, *Charmides* 153b), a pederast (Aristophanes 377 Hall and Geldart) who could be called a 'child of Night' (Aristophanes 573), both characteristics that would make appropriate his metamorphosis into a bat as he impersonates the spirit that Socrates summons in the necromantic rite. He was also a pale person of notoriously slight and weak build, as dry and fragile as a moth's chrysalis (Aristophanes 377; Anonymous 26 Edmonds), someone whom Aristophanes had described already as 'half-dead' years ago in his parody of Socrates' teaching in the *Clouds* (504).

It is this physical frailty that Aristophanes refers to as the culmination of the scene in the swamp, for Peisander, who was satirized as a coward in another comedy produced at this same festival of drama (Phrynichus, *Monotropos* frg. 20 Edmonds; cf. hypothesis for Aristophanes' *Birds*), apparently because of some otherwise unknown action in battle (Eupolis, *Exempt from Service* or *The Women Men* frg. 31 Edmonds), has come to Socrates' rite of necromancy in order to attempt to regain his own spirit that had failed him through cowardice. Instead of a miraculous return to bravery, however, he succeeds only in getting the squeaking bat-like weakling, Chaerephon.

### PEISANDER AND THE AFFAIR OF THE PROFANATIONS

More important than the joke for our purposes, however, is the veiled accusation that Aristophanes is making against Socrates by describing this imagined scene of necromancy. To understand this we must know something more about Peisander and about what was going on in Athens at this time. The *Birds* was produced at the City Dionysia in March of 414 B.C. Athens was engaged in fighting a great and lengthy war with Sparta and its allies, and just the previous year had sent its armada against the Sicilian city of Syracuse. Just prior to the sailing of the fleet on that expedition, an event had occurred that had thrown the city into confusion. It was discovered that some group of people had gone through the city, knocking off the phalluses on the stone representations of the god Hermes, the so-called herms, that were commonly placed before public and private buildings as magical guardian figures. This mutilation of the herms

was not only an act of sacrilege, but it seemed to indicate that some political group had bound its members to secrecy through mutual complicity in the crime in order to prepare the way for an attempt to overthrow the democratic government. Peisander<sup>1</sup> was a leader in the official investigation into the whole affair, and it was he on the board of inquiry who had interpreted the crime of vandalism as just such an act of conspiracy (Andocides, *On the Mysteries* 36). The investigation, moreover, was broadened to include other instances of sacrilege, and it came to light that a number of prominent citizens had been illegally performing the initiation ceremony for the Eleusinian Mystery in their private homes with dinner guests. Amongst those implicated was Socrates' famous disciple, Alcibiades, who was accordingly recalled from his generalship on the Sicilian expedition, whereupon he fled into exile in Sparta, the city that headed the coalition of states opposed to Athens and its empire in the war. He was condemned *in absentia* and his property was confiscated and sold at public auction.

Prior to this scandal, Alcibiades had been one of the most promising younger leaders of the democracy, but his flight to Sparta revealed that his demagoguery had masked his underlying sympathies for his own aristocratic class. He supported the populace merely to advance his own career. Apparently Aristophanes thought the same was true of Peisander, for a few years later, he was to emerge as a leader of the oligarchic faction that attempted to arrange for the restoration of Alcibiades. Peisander was to be prominent amongst the so-called group of Four Hundred oligarchs who seized control of the city in an attempt to come to terms with Sparta, and he too was to flee to the enemy at the frontier fortress of Decelea when the regime fell in September of 411 (Thucydides 8.49, 98.1), whereupon his property was confiscated (Lysias 7.4) and he is not heard of again.

1. The Hellenistic scholars believed that there were two Peisanders, one who was slight and the other big (Eupolis, *Marikas* frg. 182 Edmonds; Plato Cornicus, *Peisander* frg. 101 Edmonds). There can be no doubt that the one in the necromancy scene is the famous cowardly demagogue, but it is also probable that the other one was nothing but an invention of the scholarly tradition to explain the apparent distinction between a Peisander called the 'big one, the mule-driver' and another described as the 'twisted one'. The distinction is actually a misunderstood joke, comparing the penis of the offensive Peisander to that of someone of no

account (see Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* 516); hence in Hermippus (*Artopolides* frg. 9 Edmonds), 'the big Peisander mounted in silence a pack-ass with olive-wood sinews, like the one for the wood at the Dionysia', with a pun on the sexual meaning of 'mount' and the action of mounting the speaker's platform. The 'bigness' of a politician, even though he be cowardly is an indication of the trouble he can cause the Demos (see *Birds* 1477, on the demagogue Cleonymus). See also Danny Staples, *Pea Pteroenta: Plot and Metaphor in Aristophanes* 78 (unpublished dissertation, Boston University, 1978).

During his few months as one of the Four Hundred, Peisander arrested a fellow aristocrat, the orator Andocides, who originally had secured immunity in the earlier investigation into the mutilation of the herms and the profanation of the Mysteries by turning state's evidence and naming many of his associates (Andocides, *On his Return* 14). Although this informer was himself secure from prosecution at the time, a decree aimed specifically at him had later been passed, prohibiting anyone who had confessed to impiety from taking part in religious or commercial activities in the city, and he had accordingly been forced to withdraw into exile. While away from Athens, the informer had amassed a fortune as a merchant and had attempted to buy the good favor of what he thought was the rising political faction by an act of largesse to the fleet at Samos, only to find himself on the wrong side when he returned to an Athens controlled by the new group of Four Hundred oligarchs. Andocides' arrest and maltreatment by Peisander testifies to the degree of enmity that these wealthy citizens three years after the affair of the mutilation of the herms continued to direct toward someone who had caused themselves and their families so much trouble by his revelations and betrayal. Certainly Peisander, the former chief prosecutor in the investigation of the mutilations, would seem to have been acting out of character in supporting the guilty Alcibiades' restoration and, at the same time, persecuting the former star witness, unless, as is probable, the investigation into the mutilations had gotten out of hand by being linked to sacrileges in general, a broadening that went beyond the immediate problem of the suspected conspiracy and netted many who simply were discovered, like Alcibiades, to have been treating the forbidden Mystery ceremony as a private social event for the entertainment of their dinner guests.

As far as the comedian Aristophanes was concerned, Peisander was a hypocrite, both in persecuting the profaners and again at this very time that he was involved in making preparations for the transfer of the city to the oligarchic faction in 411 in order to facilitate the return of Alcibiades. As Aristophanes says in his *Lysistrata*, which was produced at this time, Peisander's changeable policy indicated that his demagoguery was for sale (489), an accusation he had first made fifteen years earlier in one of his first comedies, the *Babylonians* (81 Hall and Geldart). Moreover, again it appears that the Mystery profanations and political conspiracy are linked, for Peisander and his oligarchic associates are accused of performing the forbidden ceremony. The Eleusinian Mystery involved the drinking of a special drink, the so-called *kykeon* or 'mixed potion', and that is precisely what the hypocritical former prosecutor is accused of doing with Alcibiades and his aristocratic cronies, for, as Aristophanes claims, the

whole politics of the city has become a 'mix-up' because these plotters are again 'mixing up' some 'up-set' for the stomach, an accusation that puns by these words upon the Eleusinian 'mixed' potion (489-491).

### THE SWAMP OF DIONYSUS

What Peisander was suspected of doing in 411 is merely a continuation of his earlier misdeeds in consulting the notorious Alcibiades' teacher Socrates at the necromantic seance in the swamp with the Shade-foots, for a number of considerations will lead us to conclude that the Shade-foot parody with which we began can only be a reference to the cowardly demagogue's suspected complicity in the very scandal that he found himself hypocritically investigating. The swamp, first of all, is a clear indication of what Socrates actually is said to have been doing. The place is not in some remote exotic land, for it is but one in a series of similar parodies in this section of the *Birds*, and like the others, it can be located nowhere else but in Athens itself. It can be none other than the one swamp in Athens of which we have knowledge, the sacred Swamp near the base of the Acropolis, the so-called Swamp of Dionysus. It was precisely there that one could expect to summon up spirits, as, in fact, another comedian, the poet Eupolis, appears to have done in a play produced about this same time, the *Demes*, which involved the resurrection of the departed localities or parishes of an earlier Athens (cf. Edmond's reconstruction, fr. 90-135). This Swamp was the Athenian entrance to Hades, for such noisome places suggested to the folk imagination the putrefaction that lay beyond the grave. The god Dionysus himself was shown in a later comedy of Aristophanes, the *Frogs*, rowing across this very place to get to the other world, where he is met by a chorus of initiates from the Eleusinian Mysteries. One might well expect to find them there, for this Swamp was also the scene for a secret annual event that apparently was part of the Eleusinian rituals. There was a temple in this Swamp of Dionysus that was opened just twenty-four hours each year, from the evening of the second day of the Anthesteria Festival until the evening of the third and final day, at which time the spirits of the city's dear departed, who had returned to visit their families, were lovingly reescorted back to their proper abode in the otherworld. These spirits had wandered abroad through the city for the three days of the festival, resurrected to celebrate a drunken revel with the living, who had summoned them at the start of the feast by drinking the intoxicating spirit of the new wine that had at last completed its subterranean fermentation. There was



just one event that occurred in this temple in the Swamp of Dionysus during the Anthesteria. The so-called Queen of Athens, who was the wife of the king archon or inheritor of the sacral functions of kingship that went back to more ancient times before the secularization of the Athenian government, was prepared in this temple for her ritual union with the god Dionysus in an annual reenactment of the primal sacred marriage that magically reassured the yearly refounding of the city and reaffirmation of its fertile accord with the sources of life stemming from the other world (pseudo-Demosthenes 59.117).

This sacred marriage had some relation to the so-called Lesser Eleusinian Mystery,<sup>1</sup> a ceremony that was a preliminary to the Greater Mystery that would be performed in the autumn of the year at the neighboring village of Eleusis. Socrates' rite of necromancy, therefore, in this Swamp with a person like Peisander and at this particular date would seem somehow involved in the great scandal of the day, the profanation of the Mysteries.

### TONGUE-IN-BELLIES AND REVEALERS

Before proceeding in our investigation into what Socrates actually is supposed to have been doing, let us gain further assurance that, whatever it was, it was a profanation of the Mysteries. The Swamp parody is part of a choreographed two-part structure in the *Birds*, for which the second part is another parody involving fabulous peoples. This time the scene is a court of law conducted by 'Tongue-in-bellies' amidst a people called 'Revealers':

Amongst the Revealers by the Hidden Water is a naughty race of Tongue-in-bellies, who harvest and sow, gather fruit with their tongues and pick figs. Babbling like foreigners is this race, students of Gorgias and Philippus – and because of them, those Tongue-in-bellies, these Philippuses, everywhere in Attica the tongue is a sacrificial victim cut apart. [lines 1694-1705]

1. A fragment of a bas-relief, now in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens, originally from the sanctuary on the Ilissos River where the Lesser Mystery was celebrated, shows Heracles, holding the pitcher-shaped cup that is characteristic of the Anthesteria Festival, as he arrives for his initiation into the Lesser Mystery.

For a compilation of sources relevant to the

Anthesteria, see Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals at Athens*, second edition revised by J. Gould and D. Lewis (Oxford, 1968). The interpretation of the 'sacred marriage' as a shamanic ritual is presented in R. Gordon Wasson, Albert Hoffmann and Carl A. P. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1978) 38ff., 85ff.

In this parody, lawyers or orators are accused of aping their teachers in the quibbling play of words that make no sense in arguments proving the worse cause the better, as Aristophanes in the *Clouds* had said of Socrates, whom he considered chief amongst such teachers. There can be no doubt that this parody is meant as a companion piece for the Shade-foot verses, for structurally it would be expected since it is danced to the same choreographed rhythms and melody. Beyond that, however, it has a clear resposion in themes, with the Swamp matched by the Hidden Water and the sacrificed camel-lamb by the tongue, as well, of course, as with the matching fabulous peoples.

Here too the subject is the Mystery profanations, the great court event of the time. The Tongue-in-belly orators are hypocrites like Peisander, the prosecutor, for the fruit that their sowing and harvesting yields is bribe money, for 'picking figs' indicates people who give evidence in court against others for bounty, the so-called sycophants or 'fig-revealers'. The Tongue-in-bellies are themselves guilty of the case they try, for the lawyers are transformed into creatures with tongues in their greedy bellies, like the mysterious dwarfish woman who was supposed to have first served the Eleusinian potion to the goddess Demeter, and the Revealers amongst whom this trial takes place implicate the accusers in the crime they prosecute, since the official charge against the guilty was that they had 'revealed' the Mystery. The Hidden Water or *kleps-hydra* also has a double meaning, for it puns upon the 'water-stealer' or water clock that was used for timing speeches in the court and upon the so-named fountain near the cave beneath the Acropolis where the 'Queen' Creussa conceived and bore her son Ion while gathering flowers, an event that Euripides presents in his *Ion* tragedy as a mythical version of the sacred marriage.<sup>1</sup> A further pun on the Revealers or *Phanai* also suggests Eleusinian connotations, for the 'revealers' are verbally indistinguishable from the 'torch processions' (cf. Euripides, *Rhesus* 943), such as those that took place in the cults of Dionysus; Aristophanes in the *Frogs* has Dionysus greeted by just such a torch procession of Eleusinian initiates in the Swamp when he arrives there in the otherworld (340 ff.). Even the sacrificed tongue has similar connotations, for the orators' butchering of speech recalls the prohibition of secrecy imposed upon the central events of the Eleusinian initiation.

1. Carl A. P. Ruck, On the sacred names of hero's parentage. *The Classical Journal*, 71/3 Iamos and Ion: Ethnobotanical referents in the (1976) 235-252.

## SOCRATES AS PROFANER OF THE MYSTERIES

Actually, now that we recognize the Shade-foot parody and the corresponding parody of Revealers and Tongue-in-bellies as a reference to the contemporary scandal of the Mystery profanations, we might have expected that Socrates' rite of necromancy at this particular time could have been nothing else. The main political implication of the affair of the herms and the profanations was the anticipated pro-Spartan coup d'état, and it is not surprising that Socrates would have fallen under suspicion in the common mind. He was always associated with pro-Spartan sympathies and just the kind of aristocratic patrons and friends who might have been implicated in such a political coup.<sup>1</sup> These suspicions must have particularly centered upon him now that his disciple Alcibiades had not only been convicted of sacrilege, but was actually now living with the enemy in Sparta. It was commonly thought, moreover, that Socrates' involvement with Alcibiades was pederastic on the Laconian model (cf Plato, *Symposium* 215a ff.). It is, in fact precisely as a phillaconian that Socrates is labeled in the scene of necromancy in the Swamp, for he is given the epithet of 'unwashed', a characteristic of those young friends and disciples of his who earlier in the comedy had been said to ape him or 'Socratize' in a pro-Spartan mania, imitating his long hair and the hunger and filth that marked the rigorous indoctrination of young Spartans into their homoerotic warrior society (1281-1282). Already in the *Clouds*, Aristophanes had portrayed the filth of Socrates' disciples, a parody that supposedly was the beginning of the prejudice that would culminate two decades later in his own trial and execution for the crime of impiety in 399 B.C. (Plato, *Apology* 18b).

Not only were Socrates and his friends notorious Spartan sympathizers, but even before the great scandal of the profanations, he was suspected of profaning the Mysteries. In the *Clouds*, he had been shown teaching his students to disdain conventional theology in a parody of a mystery initiation, as they probed the lower world for the bulbous plants that in the Eleusinian myth were associated with Persephone's abduction to Hades (188 ff.). He had, in fact, even been labeled a Melian in that comedy (830), on the model either of Diagoras of Melos or Aristagoras of that same island, both of whom had profaned the Mysteries on some occasion before the great scandal of 415 (scholia to *Clouds* 830 and *Birds*

1. In addition to the documentation from Aristophanes cited in the text, note also that Socrates is portrayed by both Plato and Xenophon, himself an ardent admirer of Sparta, as praising the Dorian institutions of Crete and Lacedaemon (Plato, *Crito* 52e, *Republic* 544c, *Laws* 634; Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 3.5, 4.4).

1072). If one could accuse Socrates of profaning the Mysteries in 422, the date of the *Clouds*, certainly the proven guilt of Alcibiades seven years later would have implicated his unconventional and pro-Spartan teacher as well, and, in fact, the infamy of Diagoras is recalled in the *Birds* when the chorus of birds cites the reward that had been posted for the capture and death of that earlier profaner of the Lesser Mystery (1072-1073). It would have been inevitable, in any case, that suspicion would fall upon Socrates since it was apparently well known that he was subject to mystical trances that were so similar to the experience of the Eleusinian vision that Plato adapts the language of the Mystery to describe them (Plato, *Symposium* 174d ff., 220b ff., *Phaedrus* 250c).

## MUSHROOMS

To return, then, to our original question about what Socrates was really doing in the Swamp, it would appear that he was profaning the Mysteries. The scene of necromancy, therefore, is vital evidence about what was involved in the Eleusinian Mysteries, and evidence that hitherto has not been detected.<sup>1</sup> It remains to see whether the identity of the Shade-foots will allow us to be more precise about what happened at the Mysteries and about what Socrates is accused of doing in the company of that fabulous tribe of one-legged people from India.

I should like to show that the Shade-foot parody confirms a suggestion I made about the nature of the Eleusinian Mysteries in *The Road to Eleusis*. In that book, I and my colleagues interpreted the Eleusinian Mysteries as communal shamanic ceremonies involving the ingestion of drugs. The Shade-foots will confirm what we suspected to have been the drug involved at the Lesser Mystery.

It is appropriate first to give some background about the studies from which our theory evolved. The collaboration was organized by R. Gordon Wasson, an amateur mycologist, who brought me together with the Swiss chemist, Dr. Albert Hofmann, to investigate the subject of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

In 1968, Wasson first proposed the cautious supposition that nothing in the *Rg Veda*, a collection of religious hymns assembled in definitive form about

1. It is surprising that this reference to the recent profanations has apparently gone unnoticed, despite the fact that Socrates is labelled as a pro-Spartan in this very comedy. Previous readers of the Shade-foot ode have been misled into thinking that the Swamp must be

a foreign place since the fabulous one-footed creatures are in it, although so are three Athenians; it has also not been noticed that the Tongue-in-bellies are equally fabulous, but this ode, which is clearly a complement to the former, describes an Athenian court of law.

1000 B.C. or a little later, after a previous long tradition of oral transmission, was inconsistent with the idea that the plant and god Soma and his reputedly inebriating drink, the focus of a very ancient ritual, were to be identified as being originally a particular species of psychotropic mushroom or entheogen, *Amanita muscaria* or, as it has sometimes been called in English, the 'fly-agaric', a mushroom that has been employed until lately both in shamanic rites and as an inebriant in the forest belt of Siberia.<sup>1</sup> Since the initial publication of that hypothesis, Wasson's theory has received significant acceptance and corroboration.

Various surrogates, usually not psychoactive, replaced the original inebriant in the later performances of the ancient ritual, perhaps because the true Soma was no longer easily obtainable in the lands to which the Indo-Iranian peoples migrated and had perhaps even been forgotten with the passage of time. These substitutes perpetuated certain symbolic or physical attributes of the original as remembered in the ancient poetic phrases that went back to a time before the poems were recorded in writing. It has recently been shown that the earliest surrogate for Soma in India was fungoid, hence adding strong confirmation for Wasson's theory.<sup>2</sup>

This emergence of the lowly and often despised mushroom at the center of one of the major ancient religions validates what Wasson and his wife Valentina Pavlovna had first surmised during the years they spent together investigating the rich European folklore about fungi, for the widely dichotomous attitudes of the Indo-European peoples today seemed to suggest derivation from a still living and powerful taboo protecting the usage of a sacred plant.<sup>3</sup> It was just such a religious usage that Wasson was to discover and elaborately document amongst Amerindian shamans in his study of the Mazatec María Sabina.<sup>4</sup>

If, however, the Soma theory were justified, one should also expect to detect analogues to the shamanic rite amongst other Indo-European peoples. Recently, Wasson has discovered an Ojibway shaman and herbalist, Keewaydinoquay,

1. R. Gordon Wasson, *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1968).

2. Wasson summarizes the developments since the initial publication of *Soma* in the introduction to the new French translation. The original English text of this introduction appeared as: *Soma Brought Up-to-date. Botanical Museum Leaflets, Harvard University* 26/6 (June 30, 1978) 211-223, published also in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 99/1 (1979).

3. The Wassons privately shared this idea

with each other, although it does not appear in their massive compilation of mushroom lore: Valentina Pavlovna and R. Gordon Wasson, *Mushrooms, Russia, and History* (Pantheon Books, New York, 1957). Documentation for the theory was first forthcoming in Wasson's ensuing North American and Meso-American researches.

4. R. Gordon Wasson, George and Florence Cowan and Willard Rhodes, *María Sabina and her Mazatec Mushroom Velada* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1974).

who belongs to one of the tribes of the Algonkian Nation and who has confided to him her people's traditions about the ritual usage of *Amanita muscaria*.<sup>1</sup> The likelihood of continuity with the Siberian rites presents itself forcibly, and doubly so now if the language of the Wintun tribe of California has a close genetic relationship to the Ob-Ugrian languages of north-western Siberia.<sup>2</sup>

Could the rite be detected not only in the ancient Aryan traditions, but also, as Wasson suspected, amongst the classical cultures of Greece and Rome? It was this question that Wasson proposed to me at the beginning of our collaboration on the ancient mystery religions, which he had long suspected of centering upon drug-induced visions.<sup>3</sup> There could be no doubt that the drinking of a specific potion was part of the ceremony at Eleusis, where the culmination of the Mystery was consistently described as an overwhelming vision of spiritual presences demonstrating the relationship of the living to the dead. Drinking or drunkenness, moreover, seems to have been an element in the other, less known mysteries, such as those of the Kabeiroi at Thebes or the one celebrated at Samothrace. That the Eleusinian ceremony had been illegally performed for the enjoyment of dinner guests in private homes toward the end of the fifth century, moreover, suggested obvious parallels to the profane use of entheogens in modern times.

The ingredients of the Eleusinian potion are given as water, mint, and barley in the Homeric hymn to Demeter, our earliest literary source about the Mystery. Since the mint or *blechon* (*Mentha pulegium*) is hardly (or not at all) psychoactive,<sup>4</sup> our attention was directed to the barley. Here our third collaborator, Dr. Albert Hofmann, the discoverer of LSD, was able to supply us with the information that ergot or 'rust', a common fungal parasite on grain, contains a powerful water-soluble drug. Ergot, moreover, like other higher fungi, pro-

1. Keewaydinoquay, *Puhpohwee for the People: A Narrative Account of Some Uses of Fungi Amongst the Ahnishinaubeg* (Botanical Museum of Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, February, 1978). Keewaydinoquay is also collaborating on a further study with Wasson.

2. Otto J. Sadovszky, *Demonstration of a Close Genetic Relationship, Preliminary Report* (Fullerton, CA, July 3, 1978).

3. R. Gordon Wasson, The divine mushroom: Primitive religion and hallucinatory agents. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 102 (1956) 221-223.

4. C. Kerenyi, working with Dr. Albert Hofmann, suggested that *Mentha pulegium* may

have been responsible for the Eleusinian vision: *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter* (Pantheon, New York, 1967, translated from the German manuscript revised by the author from publications in 1960 and 1962) appendix 1. Dr. Hofmann, however, now claims that Kerenyi overstated the psychoactive properties of *Mentha pulegium*, and, in any case, this mint is clearly not strong enough to have warranted those instances of profane use and attendant severe penalties that were occasioned during the great scandal of 415 B.C. The inclusion of *blechon* in the Eleusinian potion had a symbolic significance, as explained below.

duces fruiting bodies of the characteristic mushroom shape. Did ergot figure in Greek botanic traditions in a way that might suggest its involvement in the Eleusinian Mystery?

The Greeks believed, as is to some extent actually true, that edible plants were evolved forms of more primitive, wild, and in some cases actually inedible avatars, and that agriculture, as opposed to the mere gathering of plants, was a triumph of civilization or culture. In particular, *aira* or *Lolium temulentum*, commonly called 'darnel', 'cockle', or 'tares' in English, an inedible grass that grows as a weed in fields of grain and is usually (like grain itself) infested with ergot, seems to have been thought to be a primitive form of barley, which would revert to the weedy growth if not properly tended. A similar opposition between gathered and cultivated plants involved the god Dionysus: poisonous and intoxicating wild ivy with its diminutive clusters of berries was apparently related to a cultivated plant that it resembled, the vine with its bunches of juicy grapes. This opposition is often depicted in vase paintings, where the elder Dionysus is shown confronting the younger manifestation of himself in a new generation as his own son, the boy named 'Bunch of Grapes', who carries the vine plant, while his father holds the wild ivy.<sup>1</sup> It is clear, moreover, that the winter-time mountain ceremonies of the maenads, the ecstatic female devotees of the god, involved the gathering of wild botanic versions of Dionysus, for their common implement, as shown in art and literature, was the so-called *thyrsos*, a hollow stalk stuffed with ivy leaves, a procedure that was the custom for preserving the freshness of herbs as they were gathered.<sup>2</sup> The fact that maenadic ceremonies did not occur in any relationship to the timing of the events involved in viticulture can now be understood, for these mountain rites centered not upon wine but upon the wild and intoxicating herbs gathered while the more civilized god was absent in the otherworld, undergoing the cultivation that would convert the juice of crushed grapes into an inebriant. Even wine, however, was felt to have an affinity to the toxins of wild plants, for, as we have shown, wine itself was flavored with various herbs that intensified its intoxicating qualities, hence requiring that it be diluted with several parts of water to tame it for civilized purposes.

1. Attic black-figured vase in the British Museum, storage-jar by Exekias, B 210, about 540 B.C., the elder Dionysus holding ivy sprigs confronts his son. Krater by the Altamura painter in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Ferrara, the elder Dionysus, attended by flower-bearing

maenads, seated and holding the *thyrsos*, confronts his smaller self in the form of his son standing on his lap and bearing sprigs of vine and a cup of wine. *Etc.*

2. Theophrastus, *History of Plants* 9.16.2.

In this opposition between wild and cultivated plants, the fungi played an important role, for they are seedless growths that defy cultivation and are thus paradigmatic of wildness. (The spores of mushrooms require a microscope to be seen distinctly.) Characteristic of all plants, of course, is the way they feed upon dead and putrefying matter. Here too the fungi had a special importance, for the tomb and the whole underworld were thought to be covered with mouldering growths that consumed the flesh of mortality. But even these wildest of plants could be made to function in the evolutionary botanical scheme. The Greeks realized that fermentation was a fungal process. The making of wine involved procedures and symbolism that suggested the tending of the dead and the hope for resurrection, for the blood of the harvested grape was entrusted, like any corpse, to subterranean, tomb-like containers, where the surrounding earth maintained the proper temperature for fermentation; when the process was completed, the containers were opened to release the new god, who returned together with the other spirits from the grave to celebrate a drunken revel on his birthday.

The goat also was symbolic of the more primitive god, and in the form of ithyphallic goat men, the so-called satyrs, he would lasciviously cavort and possess his ecstatic brides in the winter ceremonies on the mountains. The goat's grazing habits, however, were a danger to the cultivated vine, and the hircine representative of the god became his special surrogate, whose sacrifice was necessary to assure the continuance of more civilized manifestations of Dionysus. Amongst the religious observances of Dionysus were the great festivals of drama, where the phallic exuberance of the satyrs suggested the humorous antics of comedy, while tragedy, the song sung for the sacrificed goat, centered on the necessary fall that would reconcile man to the deeper implications of his own mortality and the healthy accord of his society with the forces of the dead.

Parallel to the Dionysian gift of liquid nature was the dry food of Demeter's grain, upon which also could be grown a transmutation of a wild fungus. The vision that resulted from the carefully programmed ingestion of the ergot potion demonstrated the continuity of life and death and reaffirmed the forward progress of Hellenic civilization. The inclusion of mint in the Eleusinian potion had a similar symbolism with regard to this evolutionary theme, for the fragrant herb had connotations of illicit sexuality; the wild herb, therefore, was appropriately bruised and crushed for the barley drink that signified the transition of Persephone from sterile concubinage to a wifedom that mediated the chthonic realm of Hades and the Olympian of Demeter and Zeus. This joining of the house of the Olympians to that of the netherworld through Persephone's matri-



mony is another instance of the evolutionary paradigm. The Mysteries were sacred to what was called a 'holy duo of goddesses', who need not be named specifically as Demeter and her daughter Persephone, for there was a singularity in their twoness that made their roles interchangeable. The original single Earth Mother Goddess of pre-Olympian times has become a duo at Eleusis to signify the reconciliation of more primitive traditions to the new era of gods headed by a father in the heavens: Persephone has become a daughter of Zeus entrusted to the house of Hades in the earth and barred from Olympian status, but in the form of Demeter, her mother, the Great Goddess resides on Olympus with her brother Zeus. The sacred Eleusinian reconciliation, moreover, gave mankind, who in some traditions was not deemed essential to the world order as ruled over by Zeus, an intermediary role, communicating with the chthonic powers for the fertility that would yield the continuing cycles of rebirth upon which the Olympians themselves depended for nourishment in the form of sacrifice.

Just as the goddesses, so too were the Mysteries double. Whereas the emphasis of the Greater Mystery was redemption from death by the incorporation of the underworld's putrefaction into a larger scheme where it would function as a source of fertility, or, in agrarian terms, as manure instead of pollution, the Lesser Mystery, which preceded it by half a year, occurred in the wild and involved the preliminary to reintegration, the Dionysian theme of Persephone's illegal abduction by death while gathering intoxicating uncultivated flowers. In view of the role played by cultivated fungal parasites in the fermentation process and in the Eleusinian potion, we suggested in *The Road to Eleusis* that a wild mushroom may have figured in the Lesser Mystery, for such a fungus would both complete the pattern and explain certain aspects of Dionysian symbolism, such as, for example, the fact that a mushroom itself could be viewed as a miniature *thyrsos*, with the intoxicating cap replacing the ivy leaves stuffed into the stalk-like stipe.<sup>1</sup>

#### AJA EKAPĀD

The Shade-foots, in whose company, as we have seen, Socrates appears to have communed with spirits in profanation of the Lesser Mystery, can be found also in Vedic traditions. The Hellenic migration into the Greek lands in the second millennium before Christ was only one branch of widespread migrations of

1. Apicius 7.15.6.

Indo-European peoples, another group of which moved down from the northwest into what is now Afghanistan and the valley of the Indus. This latter group was the so-called Aryans, whose language was Vedic, a parent of classical Sanskrit. The canonical collection of 1028 hymns called the *Rg Veda* preserves the ancient oral traditions of these people dating back to a time before the migrations when presumably they shared a common homeland with the other Indo-Europeans. We should expect to detect common elements and parallels between the Greek-speaking Indo-Europeans and the Vedic Aryans, as, in fact, we can in their languages, poetic metaphors, and customs.

In the *Rg Veda*, amidst a complex pantheon, headed by Indra, appears the god Soma, a plant that was pounded to extract a divine inebriant. This drink is described with symbolic components that, as has been recently shown,<sup>1</sup> are traceable back to an Indo-European original from which it apparently derived, for similar components occur also in the descriptions of magical drinks or potions in Greek traditions. Soma is often accompanied by Agni, the god of fire, and is richly described with formulaic epithets that note his color and metaphorically associate him with the bellowing of bulls, the pillar of the sky, the single eye, the navel, and so forth, although (remarkable for a plant) no mention is ever made of roots, leaves, blossoms, or seeds. It was this omission that attracted Wasson's notice. He demonstrated that a mushroom was the only botanic specimen that would fit such a description and that similar metaphors could be traced in later traditions about fungi.

Through oversight, however, Wasson did not mention 'Aja Ekapād' in the original edition of Soma, an omission that is repaired in his new introduction to the French edition.<sup>2</sup> Aja Ekapād, as his name implies, is the 'Not-born Single-foot', a deity mentioned six times in the *Rg Veda* and apparently an archaic name for Soma himself, for he shares epithets with him, is often accompanied by the chthonic serpent who invariably is the guardian of the holy plant, and once even has only the first of his names linked to a common epithet of Soma as Aja Nābhi, the 'not-born Navel'. As Wasson observes, 'Aja Ekapād' is the perfect binomial nomenclature for a mushroom, for mushrooms are 'not-born' since, as already mentioned, their seedless propagation by microscopic spores was not understood in antiquity, for which reason in India as in Greece (as well

1. Calvert Watkins, Let us now praise famous grains, *Indo-European Studies III* (Cambridge, MA, 1977) 468-498.

2. The oversight was first corrected in Wasson's *Soma and the Fly-agaric: Mr. Wasson's Re-*

*joinder to Professor Brough* (Botanical Museum of Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, November, 1971) 37-38, and repeated in *Soma Brought Up-to-date*.

as elsewhere) they were thought to be engendered by the fire of the lightning bolt as they burst suddenly through the soil, expanding with the absorbed water of the rainfall, a manner of conception that the Greeks, in fact, gave to Dionysus. Similarly, although the 'single-foot' attribute is, of course, common to all plants, it appears to be particularly apposite for mushrooms, which occur in folklore as the little men with only one foot, as in the following German riddle quoted by Wasson:<sup>1</sup>

*Sag' wer mag das Männlein sein  
Das da steht auf einem Bein?*

*Glückpilz! Fliegenpilz!*

The Shade-foots, who were also known to the Greeks with the botanical epithet of 'One-legs', and who came originally from the Indus valley, would seem, therefore, to be a Hellenic version of the deity Soma with the epithet Aja Ekapād. They survive into modern times amongst the Chukotka tribesmen in the region to the far north-east of Siberia. There, the spirits that reside in *Amanita muscaria* are said to materialize to those who become inebriated on the mushrooms as little people with a single leg; these leaping single-footed creatures, as numerous as the mushrooms that each has ingested, lead the intoxicated tribesmen on intricate and marvellous journeys to the land of the dead.<sup>2</sup> These tribesmen, moreover, are so impressed with the prodigious strength of the mushrooms' single leg that they often attempt to imitate them by thrusting their heads through some restraining membrane or by vigorously leaping about like the ancient jumping Shade-foots, amongst whom Socrates also communed with spirits in profanation of the Lesser Mystery.

The aptness of such a metamorphosis of mushrooms into little one-legged creatures is apparently something that suggests itself repeatedly to folk imagination, for it is thus also that they appear in the perhaps unrelated shamanic traditions of Meso-America.<sup>3</sup> Our ancient leaping Shade-foots are, furthermore, actually recognized as red-capped mushrooms in the fabulous journey to the end of the world described in C. S. Lewis's fictional *Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'*.<sup>4</sup>

In antiquity we may surmise that the Shade-foots were present by and large throughout Siberia. Although the Greeks learned of them from the Indus valley sometime after the middle of the first millennium before Christ, they were

1. Wasson, *Soma Brought Up-to-date* 221. *The Wondrous Mushroom: Mycolatry in Meso-*

2. Wasson, *Soma* 159 and exhibits 4, 22, *America* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1980).

3. For documentation, see R. Gordon Wasson, *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* (Macmillan, New York, 1952) 141 ff.

probably present for millennia earlier in the forest belt, and other versions of them no doubt also came into the Greek lands with the arrival of the Indo-Europeans at the beginning of the Mycenaean Age. We perhaps catch a glimpse of them with another attribute of Soma as the Monophthalmoi or 'One-eyes', a fabulous people who lived on the frontier with the netherworld in the steppes north of the Black Sea and were called Arimaspeans in Scythian (Herodotus 3.116, 4.13,27; Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 803 ff.). These One-eyes engaged in combat with the monstrous guardian beasts of the otherworld and were the center of religious rites of shamanism proselytized in Greece by the priest and poet Aristaeus of Proconnesus, who was said to be able to metamorphose into a raven and to travel as a spirit separate from his body (Herodotus 4.14-15). Other Monophthalmoi appear in Greek traditions as the 'Orb-eyes' or Cyclopes. They are named individually with epithets of the lightning bolt (Hesiod, *Theogony* 139) and were reputed to be workmen of Hephaestus (Callimachus, *Hymn to Artemis* 46 ff.), the god of fire in the volcanic forge. It is in this form that they may have come with the Dorians, for they figure in the epic traditions of the *Odyssey* and were said to have built the fortifications of several cities in the Argolid (scholia to Euripides' *Orestes* 965), including Mycenae, which was supposedly so-named because its founder, a son of Zeus, had picked a mushroom there (Pausanias 2.16.3).

Analogues to their name as 'Shade-foots' and 'Cover-foots' can also be found in ancient India. In classical Sanskrit, 'mushroom' is *chattra*. It is formed from the root *chad*, 'to cover' and has 'parasol' as its primary meaning. This could not have been its name before the Indo-European migrations. Since parasols were not called for in northern climes, and indeed, were unknown until recently in the regions north of India, it is probable that the Aryan invaders found the utensil in use and named it with the Indo-European root when they came south, later extending the meaning by metaphor to include mushrooms.

The metaphor, moreover, is particularly apt in Greek. The Greek parasol, like ours today, was round and ribbed with toe-like spokes that resemble the webbed foot of water fowl, which had the epithet of 'cover-footed' (*steganopodes*, Aristotle, *History of Animals* 504a7, etc.), as well as the gills of a mushroom. It was called the *skiadeion* (Aristophanes, *Birds* 1508), which is simply to say, the 'little shade', and was thus an appropriate term for the little *skia*, the spirit or ghost that was the 'shade' of former life to be summoned from the grave in a rite of necromancy.

# PROMETHEUS AS SHADE-FOOT AND THE THEFT OF FIRE

It remains for us to consider whether Aristophanes had any special reason for choosing Prometheus to bear the parasol as his standard. In the *Birds* each of the two parodies that we have been examining, that of the Shade-foots and the matching one of the Revealers and the Tongue-in-bellies, is introduced by a scene appropriately related to it. Thus, the Tongue-in-bellies at court are introduced by a scene in which Heracles humorously discovers that as a bastard son of Zeus he does not have a clear right of inheritance to his father's Olympian estate. In the same manner, the preceding scene with Prometheus carrying the parasol to shade himself from the view of Zeus overhead is a thematic introduction to the parody of Socrates' necromancy with the Shade-foots, for Prometheus clearly is himself being presented as an impersonation of a Shade-foot, and his exit, furthermore, just before the parody, even imitates the carrying of the sacred basket beneath a parasol in a religious procession (1550 ff.).

Although Prometheus's quarrel with Zeus goes back to the time he stole fire from the gods, the traditions about that primordial theft suggest that the fire had connotations of herbalism. Prometheus was said to have hidden the stolen fire in a hollow fennel stalk or *narthex* (Hesiod, *Works and Days* 52; Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 109), thus treating fire like an herb gathered and stuffed into the Dionysian *thyrsos*; *narthex* itself, in fact, became a term for a casket of drugs, apparently because of such traditional usage in the gathering of magical and medicinal plants.<sup>1</sup> It is significant, therefore, that Aeschylus in his *Prometheus* tragedy refers to the stolen fire as a 'flower' or *anthos* (7) that was given to mankind as the source of that same intelligence and clairvoyance for which Prometheus or 'Forethought' is himself named, including, in particular, knowledge of drugs and the mantic art (476 ff.).

This gift of the stolen fire was involved in the mystery traditions of the Kabeiroi, for the theft took place on the island of Lemnos (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* 2.10.23) and had its source in the volcano there that was thought to be the forge of Hephaestus (Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 7).<sup>2</sup> It was to the primordial men of that island that Prometheus gave the fire. These men were called the Kabeiroi,

1. Thus *Narthex* was used as the title for medical works by Heras, Cratippus, and Soranus (Galen 12.398, 959; Aëtius 8.45).

*Human Experience* (Pantheon, New York, 1963, translated from the German versions of 1946 and 1959) 80 ff.

2. C. Kerenyi, *Prometheus: Archetypal Image of*

the eldest of whom was supposed to have been born there from the earth itself.<sup>1</sup> In art, the Kabeiroi were portrayed as dwarfish black caricatures of mythical figures. Their leader was called Kadmillos, apparently a diminutive version of Cadmus, who came from Phoenicia and founded Thebes, where there also was a mystery cult of the Kabeiroi. These traditions perhaps facilitated the transposition of the Shade-foots to a supposed homeland in the African deserts in later antiquity.

These aboriginal Kabeiroi to whom Prometheus entrusted the divine spark of intellect were in all probability originally a primitive race of botanic creatures, for autochthonous births such as theirs are suggestive of plants. Thus at Corinth, for example, the first men actually were said to have come into being by metamorphosis from mushrooms (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.312-313; cf. Apollodorus 1.9.3); and at Thebes, Pentheus, who plays the role of the sacrificial surrogate for Dionysus in Euripides' *Bacchae*, was the son of the apparently 'serpentine' Echion, one of the autochthonous Spartoi, the men who were said to have been 'sown' by Cadmus from what is usually called in English the 'teeth' of the primordial serpent. If we translate the term more exactly for its context, it is clear that such 'teeth' must obviously be 'fangs' and hence we are dealing here with a mythical tradition about toxic botanic forms. At Athens too, we can note a similar complex of metaphors suggesting that botanic drugs were involved in the symbolism of primordial autochthony, for Erichthonius, the 'Very Chthonic' son who was born from earth out of the seed either of Hephaestus or Prometheus, was said to have bitten the nurses (Apollodorus 3.187) to whom Athena entrusted him and to have caused thereby their death in the ensuing fit of madness (Pausanias 1.38.3; Euripides, *Ion* 12 ff.).

The traditions about Hephaestus also suggest botanic paradigms for the fire that set the aboriginal creatures on the track of evolution to a higher state of being. It is no happenstance that both Prometheus and Hephaestus, as we have just seen, were said to have fathered the primordial Athenian, for they often double for each other in myth and hence it is likely that they were originally simply different aspects of the same figure, with Prometheus's so clearly transparent name merely an epithet for the other.<sup>2</sup>

It is Hephaestus, the god of volcanic fire, who is responsible for tormenting Prometheus and his brother Titans for their opposition to Zeus and the tyranny of his newly established rulership that at first was not reconciled to the existence

1. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.7.4. See Kerenyi, *Prometheus* 80-81.

2. Kerenyi, *Prometheus* 57-62.

of man, Prometheus's own creation. Such fiery torment that is a burden of self-inflicted sacrifice recalls the close association of Soma and the fire god Agni and is suggestive of the pattern of shamanic initiation or *askesis*.

To trace this idea, let us look first at the traditions involving the lame Hephaestus with magical plants and intoxication in his tormenting of the Titans. For example, as punishment for the giant or 'Earth-born' Typhon, Zeus was said to have confined him in the volcano of Aetna (Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 351 ff.), which, like the volcano on Lemnos, was thought to be a forge of Hephaestus (*Prometheus* 366 ff.). This punishment parallels that of Prometheus's brother Atlas, who stood as 'the pillar between heaven and earth' in the Garden of the Daughters of the West, the so-called Hesperides (*Prometheus* 347 ff.). The mountain with the core of fire and the special garden where magical plants grow are probably to be recognized as analogous versions of the World Axis or *axis mundi*, the place where the Tree of Life grows, allowing the shaman to ascend or descend to other realms in the torment of his *askesis*. This place is at the ends of the earth, hence, as with the Hesperides, in the place where the sun goes down. Analogous to it is the place of the dawn. Thus Hephaestus bound Prometheus in the far east, a topographical counterpoise to the torment of his brother in the land of the evening, and like the latter, it too is a place where special herbs grow. On his quest for the so-called 'apples of the Hesperides', Heracles will visit Prometheus as well as Atlas, for the two distant locales are bound by the daily journey of the sun through the darkness of the night, a trip that Heracles, who also will experience the shamanic *askesis*, was said to have taken by sailing in the fiery sun's own *depas* or 'drinking cup' (Stesichorus 8.1; Pherecydes 18a), a utensil that suggests that the voyage is one of intoxication,<sup>1</sup> and that Hephaestus, who fashions such metal cups in his forge (Aeschylus, fr. 69), may again be involved.

Other traditions also associate both the eastern and western locales with the shaman's fiery plant, for the word in Greek for the 'apple' that was to be found growing in the Garden of the Hesperides is verbally indistinguishable from the golden fleece of the 'sheep' (*melon*) that was hung on the tree in Medea's land in the far east. It was that fleece that had transported the children of the 'hallucinatory' Nephele to that otherworld environment. The equivalence of the two topographical extremes can also be sensed from the fact that the so-called 'Queen' Medusa, the Gorgon, was located in both places (Hesiod, *Theogony*

1. Lesley Cafarelli, *Temenos and Skene: Enclosure Motifs in Greek Poetry and Myth* (unpublished dissertation, Boston University, 1978).

274 ff.; Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 790 ff.). On a vase painting from southern Italy, we glimpse a remembrance that the fruit of the Medusa's special tree was a mushroom.<sup>1</sup>

Prometheus himself, in some traditions, was apparently the magical plant. A miraculous herb, parasitic on a tree and in color like the crocus, was said to grow from the blood of Prometheus in his torment. Medea picked it to anoint Jason (or Iason, in Greek, apparently so named for this anointing with the drug<sup>2</sup> that will protect him from the fire-breathing bulls guarding the tree with the golden fleece); when the plant was thus harvested, Prometheus himself groaned, according to the way that Apollonius Rhodius told the story, for the plant is said to grow from a double stem. In picking the Promethean herb, Medea is also in contact with the suffering Titan bound to his mountain, for which reason the root of the plant when it is plucked was said to resemble the flesh of a corpse that has just been cut (*Argonautica* 3.845 ff.).

The fiery Titanic drug found at the tree on the mountain in the lands where the sun is kindled and extinguished appears, as Wasson has shown,<sup>3</sup> to have had a fungal prototype in the homeland of the Indo-Europeans. In Siberia, the paradigmatic shaman's Tree is the shining white birch that is host not only to the mycorrhizal parasitic *Amanita muscaria* growing at its base, but also to the steps of shelf fungus ascending its trunk. The latter, 'punk' or *Fomes fomentarius*, provides the tinder for making fire with a fire drill, thus associating the gift of fire with the shaman's ascent to the fiery realm of his visions.

The torment of *askesis* passes from sufferer to sufferer, a labor like the sun's, forever renewed. It is upon the basis of this primitive experience in primordial times that culture is founded and continually renewed. The myth of Heracles, for example, is a case in point. He was said to have fought many poisonous monsters in order to tame the earth for mankind and to establish the reign

1. Amphora from the third quarter of the fourth century B.C., now in the Pergamon Museum, East Berlin (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antiken-Sammlung, inv. no. F 3022). See Wasson et al., *The Road to Eleusis* plate 8.

2. The name Iason contains the same *ia-* root that occurs in words such as *iatros* ('healer' or 'doctor') and *iasthai* ('to heal'). In addition to the anointment by Medea, Iason is associated with drugs through his education in his youth in the wilds with the centaur Chiron. See Ruck, On the sacred names of Iamos and Ion.

3. Wasson, *Soma* 216 ff. In Siberia, birch-bark containers were stuffed with punk, which deprived of air by tight packing would harbor the smouldering fire for upwards of two days. This custom invites comparison with the tradition of Prometheus's theft of fire hidden in the *thyrsos* or *narthex*, for the marrow of the giant fennel was used as tinder and even in modern times on some of the Greek islands is still the means of preserving the glowing embers or of carrying them from place to place (for references see Kerenyi, *Prometheus* 80).



of his divine father Zeus. His burning torment came upon him when his wife Dejanira anointed his robe with the drops of poison that came originally from one of the monstrous beasts he had killed (Sophocles, *Women of Trachis* 831 ff., 1140 ff.). In another tragedy, he was shown in a mad state, poisoned by this same primordial source (Euripides, *Heracles* 1189 ff.). This intoxication represents his regression to a primitive state, to a time before the world was civilized, when he, who would eventually pacify the earth and show the way to reconciliation with the heavens, was still a dwarfish creature called a Daktyl or 'finger man'.<sup>1</sup> The dichotomy between primitivism and culture at the Eleusian Mysteries can be detected in the tradition that claimed that this poisoned and primitive Heracles underwent purification at the Lesser Mystery (Apollodorus 2.5.12; Diodorus Siculus 4.14; Scholia to Aristophanes' *Plutus* 1013) in order to prepare him for his initiation into the Greater. Heracles, however, can be freed from his poisoned state and restored to his Olympian destiny only by passing the venom to another who will play the role of the primitive sufferer. Thus, on the pyre that was eventually lit on the mountaintop of Oeta, Heracles escaped from his mad torment, giving his venomous arrows and bow to a member of the family of Poeas, whose name suggests that he had a botanic identity.<sup>2</sup> The words for 'poison' and 'arrow' (*ios*) are identical in Greek, and the transference of the bow apparently entails also the contamination by its metaphoric complex of primitivism and toxicity. Thus when we hear of this bow again, it is in the hands of Philoctetes, a son of Poeas. He was shown in Sophocles' tragedy yearning to be burnt in the Lemnian volcano of Hephaestus (*Philoctetes* 800, 986 ff.), a release from torment analogous, as he claims, to the fiery consummation that he once afforded Heracles on Oeta (801 ff.). Instead, cursed by his inheritance, he must live a primitive existence, dragging his poisoned foot in a track like the primordial serpent's (163, 291) and hunting for food that necessarily is tainted with the arrow's toxin (105, 166). Periodically he falls into fits of madness that are described as a wild kind of intoxication, ungraced by the evolution of the custom of communal drinking of tempered wine (213, 712 ff.). Eventually, he too, it was said, passed the role of sufferer to another, when he shot Paris at Troy on his foot with an arrow, while he himself was reintegrated with society and his own foot healed with curative herbs and wine (Apollodorus, *Epitome* 8; Tzetzes, *On Lycophron* 911).

1. For a discussion of the tragic hero as reversion from Olympian to chthonic or Dionysian symbolism, see Ruck, *Duality and the*

madness of Herakles. *Arethusa*, 9/1 (1976) 53-75.

2. Poeas (or more exactly Poias) is perhaps to be related to the word for 'herb', *poie*.

Prometheus too could be freed from his torment on the mountain to which Hephaestus unwillingly had bound him only by passing his role to another. Thus it was said that the centaur Chiron was poisoned when Heracles accidentally shot him on his foot as the other centaurs fought in their typically uncivilized way to drink from a newly opened jar of wine. Despite Chiron's vast knowledge of drugs and herbs, a lore he was said to have taught many heroes in their youth spent with him in the wilderness, he was unable to heal himself. Heracles at last freed Prometheus by offering Chiron as a substitute (Apollodorus 2.5.11).

We cannot expect that Aristophanes reacted consciously to the full implication of presenting Prometheus as a Shade-foot, although it is perhaps possible that in the Kabeiric mystery traditions something was known that is now lost. Much, however, of what we have been discussing in the patterns of myth probably represents the inheritance of traditions from very ancient times whose meaning the classical writers did not question. Embedded in those traditions was a special value placed on lameness, like that of Hephaestus, Oedipus, and Philoctetes, or on single-footedness, as in the case of the 'one-shoed' (Apollodorus 1.9.16) Jason. The obvious psychological aptness of such an attribute of heroism no doubt facilitated its perpetuation, but the consistent way that it is incorporated as a detail in a larger complex involving the young hero's exposure to a mountainous wilderness of toxic plants as a preliminary to his reintegration with the civilized world suggests that the 'one-leg' paradigm, with its botanic manifestations, derives from the same ancient metaphor that in a more bizarre form was preserved as the Shade-feet.

Part of that ancient inheritance of heroic paradigms clearly derives from tales of shamans in primordial times. The torment of Prometheus and his brother Titans represents the toil imposed upon them by the new race of gods ruled by Zeus. The eagle that once was symbolic of Prometheus's flight toward the celestial realm has been expropriated as an emblem for Zeus. Prometheus no longer flies. Instead, chained to the eastern mountains that in the Iranian traditions were the home of the magical herb, he is tormented by the eagle who feasts repeatedly on the liver that was the seat of the Titan's power of divination.<sup>1</sup> The mountain itself, with its volcanic core, provides a passageway down to the netherworld (Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 1080 ff.), just as the holy plant found on its

1. On hepatoscopy and the wounding of Prometheus, see Kerenyi, *Prometheus* 39-40. For an interpretation of Prometheus's torment by the

eagle as shamanic *askesis*, see E. A. S. Butterworth, *The Tree at the Navel of the Earth* (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin, 1970) 201 ff.

slopes afforded transport to the fiery heavens. His eventual release is symptomatic of the great reconciliation that reapportioned the world amongst the earlier and later races of gods and found room as well for the humans that were his creation. With the stolen fire, at a place called Mekone, apparently named for the 'Poppy' and sacred to Demeter and Persephone,<sup>1</sup> he taught mankind how to sacrifice, cooking the edible parts of the butchered victim and burning the rest for the gods. In doing this, his shamanism, for so the name of the place would suggest, set man in his vital role in the cosmos and began the arduous evolution toward the civilized arts, for in every repetition of such sacrificial eating, the Greeks retraced, in culinary symbolism, the steps of their long progress toward culture.<sup>2</sup> Without the ritual, mankind could not come to terms with the horrible realization that life is nourished, just like plants, by what is dead, and that primitivism, as in the maenadic ceremonies, must be tended as the fertile foundations of civilization.

In addition to the common Indo-European heritage of traditional metaphors and religious ideas, however, the close proximity of the Greeks to their eastern neighbors no doubt also added to the storehouse of myth. Thus, the hero's Promethean flight with the eagle in search of Soma or the magical potion can be found in the traditions of the Indo-Iranian peoples.<sup>3</sup> Its earliest written account appears in *Rg Veda* 4.26 and 27, with parallels in the *Avesta* and later texts, as well as in the literature and art of Mesopotamia. In addition to the similarity to the Prometheus myth, the same story seems to underlie the traditions about the eagle who brings nectar to Zeus<sup>4</sup> and the myth of Ganymedes' abduction from a mountain by Zeus in the guise of an eagle so that the handsome youth might serve nectar on Olympus as cupbearer to the gods (Homer, *Iliad* 20.133-335; Vergil, *Aeneid* 5.252 ff.; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.155-161). The eagle traditionally sits in the branches of the shaman's tree. Perhaps this image too is detected in Greek, in Nonnus's description of a blazing olive tree off the coast of Tyre with an eagle at its top holding a libation cup (*Dionysiaca* 40.467 ff.).<sup>5</sup>

1. Kerenyi, *Prometheus* 42 ff. Mekone was supposed to be located in the vicinity of the Peloponnesian city of Sicyon, near Corinth.

2. Marcel Detienne, *Dionysos Slain* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1979, translated from the French edition of 1977) 68-94.

3. David M. Knipe, The heroic theft: Myths from *Rg Veda* IV and ancient near east. *History*

of Religions, 6/4 (1967) 328-360. See also the discussion of Greek and Eastern traditions associating heat with the light of mystical vision and with shamanic *askesis* in Butterworth, *Tree at the Navel of the Earth* 133 ff.

4. D'Arcy W. Thompson, *Glossary of Greek Birds* (Oxford, 1936 2nd edn.) 180-184.

5. Butterworth, *Tree at the Navel of the Earth* 85 ff.

Of particular interest for our interpretation of Prometheus's impersonation of a Shade-foot in the *Birds* are three reliefs from the temples at Sanchi and Amarāvati in India built in the first and third centuries A.D., but employing traditional symbolism that is certainly much older and which is essentially not different from that found in the eastern Mediterranean.<sup>1</sup> On these reliefs, the Tree of Life is shown as a pillar between earth and sky, resting on an *omphalos* or Navel Stone and surmounted by sunshades, apparently as indication of the fiery brilliance of the higher realm.

### PHILOSOPHERS

Aristophanes' parody of Socrates' necromancy in the Swamp makes clear that the symbolism of the Aryan fungus played an essential role in the Lesser Eleusinian Mystery. As with Soma, of course, it is possible that surrogates or substitutes were actually employed by the classical period, although the attributes of the original were in some form retained. Thus, the color of Medea's Prometheus herb is roughly consistent with the Vedic traditions, as is that also of the ergot fungus of the Greater Mystery. A similar spectrum of sacred color is described in Pindar's *Sixth Olympian Ode* as characteristic of the magical herb that was responsible for the primordial source of inspiration for the mythical ancestor of the Iamidai, the prophets who continued to practice divination at the sanctuary of Zeus at Olympia.<sup>2</sup> We should not conclude, moreover, that the *Amanitas* were not to be found in ancient Attica, for it was doubtless a deadly species of that genus that was responsible for the accidental deaths commemorated by Euripides in a famous epigram (Eparchides, quoted in Athenaeus 2.61a-b). And in the forested regions of modern-day Greece, the country people retain a knowledge of edible and inedible species.

By sending Peisander into the Swamp to consult Socrates amongst the Shade-foots, Aristophanes was cutting through appearances and showing up the vigorous prosecutor of the investigation into the scandal of the recent profanations as basically no other than he would soon turn out to be, an aristocrat like the now infamous Alcibiades, whose democratic demagoguery would last only so long as it suited his own political ascendancy. Like the other students at what Aristophanes in the *Clouds* had called Socrates' *phrontisterion* or 'thinkshop', Al-

1. Butterworth, *Tree at the Navel of the Earth* 49 ff. and plates 11-13.

2. Ruck, On the sacred names of Iamos and Ion.

cibiades and Peisander both could be expected to have learned from the philosopher to despise convention and speak with the deceitful rhetoric of the Tongue-in-bellies.

It would appear, therefore, from our discussion of the scene of necromancy that the common suspicion about people like Socrates was that they were apt to have derived their ideas about other realities and about the relativity of everything to be found in this present world from drug-induced visions. In rehabilitating the reputation of his teacher, a man who had been put to death for impiety, Plato chose precisely a time just before the scandal of the profanations to portray Socrates at Agathon's symposium as a person subject to spontaneously generated periods of mystical trance and to emphasize the non-erotic involvement and growing separation between the philosopher and his drunken disciple Alcibiades. That, however, was not what was commonly believed by Socrates' contemporaries. To them, he seemed to speak of experiences that resembled those of a shaman, and his unconventional manner of life and his novel deities made it likely that he acted as a mystagogue for the young men devoted to him.

He was, in fact, not unlike other early philosophers whose lives and ideas have been recognized as shamanistic.<sup>1</sup> Amongst them, let us recall only Empedocles, who was said to have attempted to prove his divinity by jumping into a volcano, leaving behind only a single sandal (Heraclides 77 Voss). In his life he had a great reputation as a healer and, as he himself says, he was sought in his native Sicily by many who wanted prophecies or drugs (111, 112 Diels). He died when Socrates was in middle age, but the characteristic life of such men, as the necromancy parody shows, still set the expected pattern for wise men in Athens at the end of the century. Even Plato in the following decades would describe his master's devotion to wisdom by the metaphor of the inspiring god of Love, the child of ragged poverty, who spent his whole life in philosophic quest, an enchanter and herbalist and sophist (*Symposium* 203d).

1. E. R. Dodds, *The Greek shamans and the origin of puritanism, The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1951) 135-178.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### THE WILD AND THE CULTIVATED: WINE IN EURIPIDES' *BACCHAE*

In the *Bacchae*, the cultivation of grapes for the making of wine is presented as a novel advance in the science of agriculture. The prophet Teiresias compares it to the cultivation of grain as mankind's basic food. The latter is the dry nourishment that Demeter offers, whereas wine is its liquid complement, the new gift that the god Dionysus 'discovered and introduced' (ἤρρε κείσηνέγκατο 279). It is something as yet unknown in Thebes. Hence, he explains that it is a potion prepared from the clusters of grapes from the vine. As a 'drug', it is the supreme anodyne (οὐδ' ἔστ' ἄλλο φάρμακον πόνων 283), granting sleep and surcease from pain and daily cares (280-283), and it is a divine inspirative of wisdom and courage (298 ff.).

Others also have heard about wine in Thebes. The herdsman too claims that the vine is apparently an anodyne (παυσίλυπον ἄμπελον 772), without which there can be no love or pleasure for mankind (773-774). If such are the characteristics of this new drug, however, his praise of wine would seem an inappropriate conclusion to his narrative of the wild events he has just witnessed on Mount Cithaeron, for he barely escaped with his life from the god's maddened devotees. Clearly, we are not to assume that the revel on the mountain was caused by this new gift of the vine's potion. In fact, he had begun his narrative by stressing that there was no amorous dalliance amongst the women, nor were they drunk on wine, as the king who opposes this new god has suspected (686-688).

Pentheus, as will be shown, is king of a pre-viticultural city, and his persona in the drama is characterized by the antithetical properties to the wine whose introduction he opposes. In such a city, it cannot be the fermented juice from the cultivated vine that is responsible for the maenadic revels on the mountain, but wild and hunted growths instead, more primitive versions of the god, pre-dating his Asian journey of discovery. This contrast of the wild and the cultivated will establish the basis for a new understanding of Euripides' meaning in this drama and of the tragic genre in general as a religious celebration of Dionysus.

## THE DISCOVERY OF WINE

At the beginning of the *Bacchae*, Dionysus announces that he has come to Thebes from Asia Minor bringing with him the cult of his new religion and that he has planted what must be the first grape-bearing vine in this land where he was born (11 ff.), for Thebes is a country that has yet to learn the art of viticulture and experience the blessings of wine. The herdsman, for example, can praise wine later only from hearsay evidence (ὥς ἐγὼ κλύω 771), and Teiresias introduces his explanation about the parallel advances in agriculture by predicting the god's future greatness in Greece. Pentheus too knows of wine only by rumour (λέγουσι δ' ὥς τις εἰσελήλυθε ξένος 233 ff.) and he suspects that the experience that the god is introducing from Asia is merely a 'fiction' (πλασταῖσι βακχέλαισιν 218) that the women use as a 'pretext' (πρόφασιν 224) for illicit love-making in the wilderness.

The situation in Thebes at the beginning of the play corresponds with other Greek traditions about the importation of viticulture, as well as with historical fact, for the growing of grapes for the production of wine apparently did originate in Asia Minor as a parallel development to other advances there in the cultivation of human foods. The art of viticulture spread westward from there via Crete and the Aegean islands to Thrace and mainland Greece.<sup>1</sup> With wine came also the cult of its ecstatic religion, undergoing accretions and developments, notably from Egyptian and Minoan influences. Dionysus himself traditionally landed in Attica around the fifteenth century before the Christian era,<sup>2</sup> and the names of his first proselytizing priests suggest Semitic, eastern Mediterranean and Egyptian origins.<sup>3</sup> His name has been read in Mycenaean-

1. Kerenyi, *Dionysos: Archetypal Image of Indestructible Life* (Princeton University Press 1976) 50 ff.

2. Hieronymus's Latin translation of Eusebius records 1497 B.C. as the date of the god's arrival in Attica and 1387 B.C. as the date of his birth from Semele at Thebes. The date of arrival derives from Athenian traditions preserved in the Attidographers. See Kerenyi 143, note 32.

3. Dionysus was first received as a guest in Attica by Semachus, the founding hero of the deme of Semachidae, whose name appears to be West-Semitic, meaning 'made to rejoice'. Another tradition placed the god's landfall similarly on the west coast of Attica at Ikarion,

where he was received by Icarius, whose name suggests that he came originally from Icaria, the island off the coast of Asia Minor, where the god was supposed to have been born. Icarius can be related to Caria and to the 'light-bearer' names of Ikar (the star Sirius) and Iacchus (a name of Dionysus at the Eleusinian Mysteries), as well as the Egyptian Iachim, a man who was supposed to have lived in the time of the otherwise unknown King Senes. A third route of arrival was through the mountain village of Eleutherae on the Boeotian border, a place associated with Eleuther and an apparition of the chthonic aspect of the god under the name of Melanaigis, the 'black goatskin', and with the proselytizing seers Pegasus and Melampous, the

Minoan documents, as well as the name of his arch-opponent Pentheus, indicating that the antagonism between the two belongs to a very early stratum of the religion as it developed in the Greek lands.<sup>1</sup>

As would be expected, the name for the newly cultivated plant, the 'vine' or *ampelos* (ἄμπελος), appears to be a word assimilated into Greek from a non-Indo-European language of the Mediterranean substratum, like other words for things that were novel to the experience of the immigrating Indo-Europeans.<sup>2</sup> The same is probably the case for the intoxicant fermented from the vine's grapes, 'wine' or *oenos* (οἶνος), and for the 'cluster of grapes' or *botrys* (βότρυς).<sup>3</sup> It is also possible, however, that *oenos* is derived from a very ancient Indo-European word, ultimately related to the Latin word for 'grape-vine' (*vitis*) and the Greek *itys* (ἴτυς), 'circular rim', as of a wheel supported by its spokes.<sup>4</sup> If the latter is the case, *oenos* presumably referred originally to some intoxicant other than wine, perhaps to a plant appropriately designated with the metaphor of *itys*. In Greek mythical traditions, *Itys* appears with Dionysian connotations as the butchered son of the maenadic sisters, Procne and Philomela, whose story involves the pattern of possession and abduction by a chthonic spirit, as in the myth of Persephone.<sup>5</sup>

The name of Dionysus himself contains the Indo-Europeans' word for their chief god, Zeus/Dios, and testifies to an attempt to incorporate the alien deity into Indo-European mythology as a son of Zeus, the so-called 'Nysian Zeus'. A similar assimilation occurs in the traditions about Zeus's birth on Crete, which clearly must be a rebirth since the god existed before the Indo-Europeans made contact with the Minoan culture of Crete. This Minoan 'Zeus' was one of the so-called 'divine-child' deities of botanic nature.<sup>6</sup> One of the names for him may have been retained in classical Greek as *Bacchus*, another name for Dionysus

latter being the one who supposedly introduced the phallic worship of Dionysus from Egypt by way of the Peloponnesus. See Kerenyi 73 ff., 146 ff., 160 ff.

1. Juan Puhvel, Eleuther and Oinoatis: Dionysiac Data from Mycenaean Greece, in *Mycenaean Studies, Wingspread*, 1961: *Proceedings of the Third International Colloquium for Mycenaean Studies held at 'Wingspread', 4-8 September 1961*, edited by E. L. Bennett, Jr. (Madison 1964) 164-168. The tablets in question are as follows: Pentheus on Knossos As 603; Dionysus on Pylos Xa 102 and Pylos Xb 1419; Eleuther on Pylos Cn 3.1-2.

2. P. Chantraine, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la*

*langue grecque* (Paris 1968) s.v. *ampelos*; H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Heidelberg 1954-1970) s.v. *ampelos*.

3. Chantraine and Frisk s.v. *oinos* and *botrys*.

4. Chantraine s.v. *oinos*.

5. C. Kerenyi, *The Heroes of the Greeks* (Thames and Hudson, Southampton 1959, 1974, 1978) 287-289.

6. On the 'divine child' figure in Greek religion, see M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan-Mycenaean Religion and its Survival in Greek Religion* (Lund 1949) 531-583; and B. C. Dietrich, *The Origins of Greek Religion* (De Gruyter, Berlin 1974) 14 ff., 88 ff.



and for a 'sacred branch' or *bakkhos* (βακχος), which, according to Hesychius, is a Phoenician word for 'lamentation', such as might be expected to attend the death of such divine children, as in the classical rites of Adonis.

The myths recounting the story of the god's arrival in Greece attest to the pattern involved in the assimilation of his cult. Traditionally, he is met by a king and his daughters, who are initiated into his new religion.<sup>1</sup> This initiation, as we shall see, was apparently some form of 'sacred marriage' between the princess and the god, a shamanic rite of spiritual possession whereby the alien deity was reborn in his Hellenic form, for, as the poet of the Homeric hymn to Dionysus claimed, the god's mother was said to have borne him in many places along his route to Thebes, although actually the true account was that he was born far off in Phoenicia near the streams of Egypt on a mountain called Nysa (1.1-9), the sacred place after which he is named as the 'Nysian Zeus'. The paradox of a foreign as well as native births was reconciled in later traditions by assuming that the Dionysus who arrived in Greece as the bringer of his cult was different from the one born at Thebes, but the two must originally have been the same god,<sup>2</sup> and, in the *Bacchae*, Euripides is closer to the truth in disguising the Theban-born Dionysus as the prophet arriving from the East with the rites of his foreign religion of viticulture, which his mother's people do not yet know.

As the god was repeatedly born anew as Zeus's son, the sacred place of his birth also was multiplied, so that there were many places called Nysa, and women other than Semele who were his mother. Even in antiquity it was recognized that the supposedly Theban Semele, whose family had migrated from Phoenicia, was no other than the Earth Mother (*F. Gr. H.* 244 F 131 Jacoby) imported from Anatolia. Thus Persephone, the great queen of the netherworld, was his mother too, and she also experienced the sacred marriage at Nysa, according to the Homeric hymn to Demeter (2.17).

The latter tradition gives us valuable insight into what was involved in these sacred marriages, for Persephone was said to have been gathering wild flowers with a group of maiden women when she was possessed by the spirit of death, the lord of the otherworld, who was synonymous in such experiences of spiritual possession with Dionysus himself (Heraclitus 15 Diels). By that abduction, she eventually gave birth to a new form of Dionysus.<sup>3</sup> The ecstatic devotees in the

1. Kerenyi, *Dionysos* 139-188.

2. Kerenyi, *Ibid.* 143-144.

3. Kerenyi, *Ibid.* 83, 110 ff. The birth of Dionysus by Zeus from Persephone was specifically

a Cretan tradition (Diodorus Siculus 5.75.4) and is parallel to the traditions of the Cretan assimilation of Zeus by a similar rebirth.

cults of Dionysus similarly performed some secret ritual that apparently symbolized the gathering of wild plants, for the recurrent indication of their maenadic occupation is a strange implement, the so-called *thyrsos* (θύρσος), apparently another non-Indo-European loan-word in Greek that designated a stylized 'sacred branch' or 'wand' in the form of a hollow giant fennel stalk crowned with leaves of wild ivy. As I have shown in a recent study of the Eleusinian Mysteries,<sup>1</sup> this sceptre of Dionysus takes on particular meaning when we consider that such hollow stalks were customarily employed by herbalists in Greece to preserve the freshness of the wild plants they gathered (Theophrastus, *H. P.* 9.16.2) and that 'ivy' or *kissos* (κίσσος), a plant sacred to Dionysus, was the sort of magical wild plant that would have been gathered in this manner, for it was reputed to be poisonous, with a deranging effect upon the mind (Pliny, *H. N.* 24.75; Dioscorides, *Alex.* 2.176). The plant that Persephone gathered was also reputed to be a drug, for the flower that she picked was the *narkissos* (νάρκισσος), like *kissos*, another loan-word in Greek from a non-Indo-European language,<sup>2</sup> but a plant that was thought in classical times to have been so named because of the 'narcotic' stupor that it induced (Plutarch 2.647b; Dioscorides 4.161). A further similarity between Persephone's Nysian abduction and the activities of the Dionysian maenads in the sacred places called Nysa is indicated by the generic titles of the god's devotees in their mountain rites, for they too, like Persephone, were his nymphs or 'brides', as well as the women who 'nursed' him in his infancy (Homeric hymn 26). These women who nursed another's child are, more exactly, 'wet-nurses', and their affinity with Persephone's realm was symbolized by their patronage by Hecate (Hesiod, *Theogony* 450-452), another manifestation of Persephone as the chthonic queen.

Other traditions confirm that the Dionysian sacred marriage and ecstatic madness are to be understood as symbolic of what, originally at least, was a drug-induced shamanic possession, for Semele was sometimes said to have conceived Dionysus, not by means of the destroying thunderbolt of Zeus, but actually by ingesting a potion containing the heart of Dionysus himself (Hyginus, *F.* 167), and, in addition to the *thyrsos*, maenads are sometimes depicted wielding gigantic pestles, an obvious implement for herbalist activities.<sup>3</sup> In the *Bacchae*,

1. R. Gordon Wasson, Carl A. P. Ruck and Albert Hofmann, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York 1978) 88.

2. Words ending in *-issos*, like those in *-inthos*, are not Indo-European.

3. *Hydria* from Nola, *Archäologische Zeitung* 26 (1888) 3-5, pl. 3 (= illustration 5 in W. H. Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexicon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie* (Olms, Hildesheim 1884-1937, 1965<sup>2</sup>) s. v. Orpheus): Orpheus attacked by a Thracian maenad with a mortar in the presence of a satyr.

moreover, *narthex*, the word for the 'giant fennel', is apparently synonymous with the *thyrsos*; metaphorically, *narthex* could be used to describe a container for drugs and was thus employed as the title for medical treatises by several ancient doctors (Galen 12.398, 959; Aëtius 8.45), and in Euripides' play it seems to contain Syrian frankincense (144), an incense that was reputed to affect the mind (Dioscorides 1.81).

Even more explicit, however, is the tradition about the abduction of Oreithyia, which Plato rationalizes in the *Phaedrus* (229c). She was said to have been ravished by the wind Boreas. Her name describes her as an ecstatic woman on a mountain, and in the rationalized version of her myth, she was playing on the mountain with her friend Pharmakeia, the 'use of drugs', when she fell to her death in a gust of wind. Oreithyia, furthermore, was one of the *Hyakinthidai* or Daughters of Hyakinthos, a vegetative deity who changed upon his death into the *hyakinthos*, another pre-Indo-European plant name assimilated into Greek. Like Itys, whose name is supposed to be the nightingale's eternal lament (Sophocles, *Electra* 148), and perhaps also like the Phoenician Bakkhos, Hyakinthos has connotations of mourning, for his flower was supposed to imitate the letters that spelled the sound of lamentation (Moschus 3.6-7; Euphorion, frg. 36M Powell; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 10.215). Hyakinthos appears to have been an aboriginal deity at Sparta, later supplanted by Apollo,<sup>1</sup> who, like Dionysus, as a son of Zeus represents another assimilation of a pre-Greek god into Indo-European traditions. Oreithyia's abduction by the wind, moreover, is a rather transparent metaphor for 'inspiration' and chthonic possession, especially in view of the wind's direction from the wintry north.<sup>2</sup> Hyakinthos himself was destroyed by the

1. J. D. Mikalson, Erechtheus and the Panathenaea. *American Journal of Philology*, 97 (1976) 141-153.

2. 'To blow or breathe upon' (ἐμπνέω, καταπνέω) is the Greek equivalent of the Latin *inspire* and commonly means 'inspire': for example, Hesiod, *Theogony* 31; *Plutarch* 2.421b; Homeric hymn to Demeter 238; Aristophanes, *Lysistrata* 552; etc. All winds were thought to blow to and from caverns within the earth: Elmer G. Suhr, *Before Olympus: A Study of the Aniconic Origins of Poseidon, Hermes and Eros* (Helios, New York 1967) 30 ff. The destructive Boreas was an apt figure for a deadly ravisher of vegetation. Oreithyia was a daughter of the primordial Athenian king Erechtheus. Her sister Creusa was similarly ravished in a sacred marriage

while picking flowers (Euripides, *Ion* 889) in a spot exposed to the north wind (11). Creusa herself was married later to a son of Aeolus, the lord of the winds (63). Since it was apparently Erechtheus himself who originally enacted such deadly abductions upon his own daughters (260 ff.), these unions with foreigners are probably to be understood as displacements of his role upon outside forces, who are merely aspects of his own persona, as in the traditions about the immigrant and indigenous Cadmus, on which see 'The Regression of Cadmean Thebes', below. By such sacred unions, moreover, the sinister alien forces become incorporated into the sustaining beneficent metaphysical alliances of the city, on which see 'The Reconciliation with Primitivism', below. In actual fact, the Athe-

equally sinister wind from the west, the lands where the sun goes down. The abduction of Oreithyia by Boreas is depicted on a fifth-century Attic *hydria* in the Vatican Museum; she is shown with Pharmakeia and holds the wild flower that she has apparently just picked, as the winged Boreas abducts her.

It would be expected that with the advent of viticulture, the wine god would be assimilated to the prevailing patterns of shamanic religions, for the fermented juice of the cultivated grape, as well as the pre-viticultural magical plants, induces a kind of spiritual communion with deity. Some aspects of this assimilation must have occurred before Dionysus arrived in the Greek lands with his gift of the vine, and still others after the coming of the Indo-Europeans. There is, however, a basic pattern to be discerned in these assimilations. Dionysus is represented both by the grape-bearing vine and by wild plants reputed to be intoxicating or poisonous. The mountain revels did not occur in the vineyards or during the time of year suitable for agriculture, but in the winter months, when the Greek mountains bloom with untended flowers, and in the wilderness. They are characterized by the symbolism, not of the harvest, but of the hunt, a search both for wild plants and for animals, that were wrenched brutally to pieces and eaten raw in a primitive manner, predating the civilizing advent of the arts of cooking. The brutality of this primitive experience was clearly meant as regression to a primordial existence. The women were said on occasion actually to have eaten their own children (Plutarch 299e; Aelian, *Varia Historia* 3.42; Apollodorus 2.2.2, 3.4.3, 3.5.2; Nonnus 9.49 ff., 47.484 ff., 48.917 ff.). In the *Bacchae*, they attack village agricultural settlements and their tilled fields of grain (748 ff.) and invert the normal order of society, for they are females performing the hunt, an occupation more appropriate for males,<sup>1</sup> and, thereby, they regress to the role of male-dominating women who seemed to prevail in the mythical traditions about primordial times.

The prime botanic symbol of this Dionysian inversion of the civilized order was the ivy or *kissos*, by one account, the actual meaning of Nysa (Pseudo-Dioscorides, *de Mat. Med.* 2.179). Its leaves and manner of growth bear an uncanny resemblance to the vine, but it is a wild plant and its diminutive berries are like primitive versions of the clustered grape. The ivy, moreover, reputedly is intoxicating in itself, whereas the grape must be harvested and tended

nians believed that their marital alliance with Boreas was responsible for the destruction of Xerxes' fleet off Mount Athos as he came against Greece, and they commemorated the natural disaster by building a temple to Boreas on the

supposed site of his union with Oreithyia (Herodotus 7.189).

1. Marcel Detienne, *Dionysos Slain* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1979, translated from the French edition of 1977) 20-52.

through the long fermentation process. In the winter when the vine is leafless and dormant, the ivy grows like the vine on upright stems, blooming at the time of the autumn grape harvest and producing its fruit in the spring as the vine comes back to life, a return that seems markedly reluctant, compared to the spring-time growth of other plants. During the summer, while the vine grows upright, the ivy now enters into a second stage of growth, with trailing tendrils of leaves of the more familiar shape. It is a plant of dual nature, like the twice-born god it represents, and was thought capable of hybridizing from one variety to another. As Walter Otto has observed, 'The vine and the ivy are like siblings who have developed in opposite directions and yet cannot deny the relationship.'<sup>1</sup> Ivy, moreover, was thought to be parasitic, wildly sending out roots all along its stem and capable of sustaining its own life from the nourishment extracted from the host trees upon which it climbs, eventually destroying them, and even continuing to grow when its contact with the ground is severed (Theophrastus, *H. P.* 3.18.9). Ivy was related to the vine apparently as the weed to the cultivated hybrid.

Ivy was the vine's avatar. It belonged mythologically to a previous generation. Dionysus himself was called Kissos (Pausanias 1.31.6), but never Ampelos or 'vine'. It was only after his own sacred marriage with his maenadic bride Ariadne that he produces sons named Staphylos or the 'clustered grape' and Oinopion, 'vinous', whom Dionysus first taught how to make wine (schol. in Apollonium Rhodium 3.997). This evolution is often a theme in vase paintings, as, for example, on the *krater* by the Altamura painter, where Dionysus is shown confronting the younger image of himself standing on his lap: Staphylos holds a wine cup and sprigs of vine, while his seated father, attended by flower-bearing maenads, holds the ivy-crowned *thyrsos*.<sup>2</sup>

Other pre-viticultural magical plants are also associated with Dionysus as his primordial avatar. Amongst these are to be counted the opium poppy,<sup>3</sup> whose role in Minoan religion is attested by the female 'sleeping' idol from Isopata in the Iraklion Museum, who wears a diadem of the plant's seed capsules, each painted with the slit that would be cut to extract the drug. Dionysus

1. Walter F. Otto, *Dionysos: Myth and Cult* (Bloomington, Indiana 1965, translated from the German edition of 1933) 153 ff.

2. Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Ferrara. The confrontation of the seated god and his diminutive son is reminiscent of similar scenes depicting the birth of Dionysus, the younger

Zeus, out of the thigh of his Olympian father.

3. On the role of opium in early Mediterranean culture, see P. G. Kritikos and S. P. Papadaki, *The History of the Poppy and of Opium and their Expansion in Antiquity in the Eastern Mediterranean Area*, *Bulletin on Narcotics* (United Nations, New York), 19 (3) (1967).

himself is seen wearing such a crown on a volute *krater* in the National Archaeological Museum of Taranto: he is depicted as a youthful hunter amidst ecstatic maenads, one of whom holds the *thyrsos*. In a similar manner, Dionysus assimilated the role of honey and its ferment, mead, from the Minoan culture.<sup>1</sup> The latter intoxicant involves the symbolism of the bee, who, like the herb-gathering maenadic women in the wilds, goes from flower to flower, extracting their essence, which is a drug related to the venom of serpents, but its beneficial antithesis, instead of a poison.<sup>2</sup> Such a ritual is apparently depicted on a gold signet ring from a tomb near Knossos, now in the Iraklion Museum: women with the heads of insects are seen dancing amidst flowers as they experience the mystical apotheosis of a deity.

The association of Dionysus with certain trees, in particular the resin-bearing firs and pines, is also testimony to such an assimilation of pre-viticultural intoxicants into Dionysian religion. Primitive man cut the bark of such trees to extract the sap, which would ferment to produce an intoxicant (Pliny, *N. H.* 12.2).<sup>3</sup> Thus Dionysus maintains several 'arboreal' epithets, such as Dendreus, Endendros, and Dendrites, and he is called Phleus as the god of the 'abounding sap'.<sup>4</sup> Thus too, the maenads carried sacral branches or *bakkhoi* for the mountain revels (*Bacchae* 109-110), and, as we shall see, the final consecration of Pentheus as the Dionysian sacrifice will take place in the god's sacred tree. Greek wine, moreover, assimilated the taste of such more primitive intoxicants, for it was resinated (Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 190 *cum schol.*) in the manner of modern retsina.

We should expect that whatever pre-viticultural intoxicant figured in the shamanic religions of the Indo-Europeans would similarly be assimilated to the cult of wine as an avatar of the evolved and cultivated god. The Aryan branch of the migrations of these northern peoples into Iran and India in the second millennium before Christ preserved a shamanic cult from their homeland. This religion is recorded in the collection of Sanskrit hymns known as the *R̥g Veda*, which is the written form of what was originally oral and formulaic material dating back to a period before the migrations. Amongst the deities of a complex

1. Kerenyi, *Dionysos* 29-51.

2. Pindar (*Olympia* 6.43 ff.) describes the primordial inspiration of a divinely born child as his nourishment in the wilderness by serpents who feed him with honey, a beneficent transmutation of their venom. See Ruck, On the Sacred Names of Iamos and Ion: Ethnobotanical Referents in the Hero's Parentage, *Classical Journal*, 71 (3) (1976) 235-252. Dionysus himself was

first fed with honey from his nurse at Nysa (Apollonius Rhodius 4.1134-1136).

3. Gaetano Forni, The Origin of Grape Wine: A Problem of Historical-Ecological Anthropology, *Gastronomy: The Anthropology of Food and Food Habits* (Margaret Arnott, ed.) (Mouton, The Hague 1975) 67-78.

4. E. Werth, *Grabstock, Acker und Pflug* (Ulmer, Ludwigsburg 1954) 229.

pantheon appears the god Soma, a god who was a plant that was sacrificed to extract its inebriating drug for a sacred potion. The physical properties of this plant are recorded in its formulaic epithets and descriptions in the hymns. Although Soma is a plant, surprisingly no mention is ever made of its flower, leaves, or roots. R. Gordon Wasson has demonstrated, to the satisfaction now of most Indo-Iranologists, that the original Soma, for which substitutions were made in the later performances of the rite, was a particular mushroom, the *Amanita muscaria* or 'fly-agaric', a plant that still figures in Siberian shamanism today. This mushroom grows in northern latitudes only in association with the roots of certain trees, in particular, pines, firs, and birches. The birch, because of this association, figures symbolically as the shaman's Tree of Life, the axis by which he ascends to the realm of the gods.

The Hellenic branch of these Indo-European peoples can be expected to have brought some knowledge of the traditions of this shamanic cult with them on their migrations into the Greek lands. This indeed seems to be indicated by the fact that Greek epic preserves a pattern for the mixing of magical potions that has formulaic analogues in the Vedic material. Working with Wasson and the Swiss chemist, Dr. Albert Hofmann, I have attempted to show that the Eleusinian Mysteries, and probably the other mystery religions of classical Greece, can be interpreted as communal shamanic seances, in which mystical visionary experience was induced by the ingestion of drugs. For the Greater Eleusinian Mystery, the drug was a water-soluble extract of ergot, either expressly cultivated on barley or gathered from other, weedy grasses, such as *Lolium temulentum*. This fungus, which produces fruiting bodies of the characteristic mushroom shape, is a natural source of psychoactive alkaloids commonly referred to as LSD.

The paired Eleusinian Mysteries, which centered upon the art of cultivating grain, were, like the Dionysian art of viticulture, an assimilation of the religious traditions of the pre-Greek agrarian peoples into Indo-European mythology. Thus the original solitary Mother Goddess becomes split into the sacred duo of the Mysteries, Demeter, an Olympian as sister of Zeus, and the chthonic Persephone, who, like Dionysus, has been reborn as a child of Zeus. *Lolium*, which in Greek was called *aira* (αἶρα), was thought to be the inedible avatar from which the cultivated barley had been evolved by the agricultural arts and into which it would again revert if not properly tended. The Greater Mystery celebrated this successful hybridization and reconfirmed the forward evolutionary progress of Hellenic culture, a civilization nourished like the barley itself by its healthy accord with its roots in the chthonic realm.

The cultivation of grain is the culmination of an event that began in more primitive times, namely, the abduction of Persephone while gathering wild flowers. This illicit stealing of her as a concubine eventually is legitimized in a more civilized age as she becomes a wife related by law to the powers of death. The primitive precedent for the Greater Mystery was imitated as the Lesser Mystery. By investigating the traditions about a fabulous Indian tribe of single-footed, parasol-like creatures who were supposedly implicated in a profane performance of the Lesser Mystery, I have demonstrated that the symbolism of the Indo-European wild mushroom, with analogues to the Vedic material, was preserved at this rite that was considered the prelude to the revelation of the Greater Mystery. In view of the parasol metaphor, moreover, it seems possible that if *oenos* and *itys* did indeed refer originally to a pre-viticultural intoxicant of the Indo-European people before their migration into Greece, the identity of that intoxicant was fungal, for the metaphor of a 'circular rim' is singularly apposite for a mushroom. Apparently by coincidence, it is actually as such that the sacred mushroom of Mesoamerica is indicated pictographically.<sup>1</sup>

It is appropriate that the fungi should have figured in the symbolism of the hunt, as opposed to cultivation, for they are the prototypic wild plant. Their propagation by microscopic spores instead of seeds made their manner of growth a mystery in antiquity, and, even today, certain species resist cultivation. For this reason, in Greece, as well as in India, they were thought to be planted by the lightning bolt, as they burst suddenly from the ground, swollen with the water absorbed from the rainfall. Dionysus, himself, had such an engendering by his Indo-European father, whose bolt of lightning can be traced as a symbol of enlightenment in Asiatic shamanism.<sup>2</sup> The assimilation of the fungi to the Dionysian complex of symbolism as the wild avatar of the cultivated god can be noted in the metaphoric description of a mushroom as a miniature *thyrsos* (Apicius 7.15.6), with the intoxicating cap atop its stipe substituting for the crown of gathered ivy leaves.

1. R. Gordon Wasson, *The Wondrous Mushroom: Mycolatry in Mesoamerica* (McGraw Hill, New York 1980) 64. Wasson identifies the flower glyphs that decorate the effigy of the Aztec deity known as Xochipilli or the 'Prince of Flowers' as all indicating various magical plants or 'entheogens' that figured in shamanism. By another amazing coincidence of iconography, the butterfly in both Mesoamerican and Hellenic cultures indicates the soul. A common word in Greek for 'butterfly' is *psyche* or 'soul',

and *Psyche* is actually depicted as a butterfly on a neo-Attic marble pedestal in the Vatican, probably copied from an original work of the second century B.C.: the soul is being burnt by two weeping Eroses as a Dionysian sacrifice, a parallel event to the visit of the drunken god to a poet, and the preparations for the dismemberment of a sacrificial animal and its boiling in milk. See Kerenyi, *Dionysos* plate 64 B.

2. E. A. S. Butterworth, *The Tree at the Navel of the Earth* (De Gruyter, Berlin 1970) 129 ff.



Other characteristics of fungi would have facilitated the assimilation of the viticultural deity to Indo-European traditions. Each year in Greece, the three winter months belonged to a primitive, maenadic aspect of Dionysus. These were the months that the harvested and presumably dead viticultural deity spent in the otherworld, and, even at Delphi, the Olympian sanctuary regressed to more primitive Dionysian rites in honor of chthonic powers. In the absence of his cultured self, Dionysus was represented by the *phallos*.<sup>1</sup> The phalloid shape of mushrooms, which fruit in the non-viticultural season, made them an apposite metaphor for the male organ (Archilochus, frg. 34 Diehl). The *phallos* itself, as a symbol of Dionysus, was an importation from Egypt by the seer Melampous (Herodotus 2.49) in the Mycenaean age,<sup>2</sup> although it was a Greek innovation to represent the god by the *phallos* alone, instead of a movable one, in the Egyptian manner, attached to the god's effigy. Melampous belongs to a tradition similar to that of the confrontation between Pentheus and the Dionysian prophet, for it was he who cured the daughters of Proetus of the madness that afflicted them when their brother Megapenthes opposed the rites of Dionysus. Since their madness took the form of bovine rutting, the Egyptian import suggests that their cure comprised sexual gratification.

The metaphor of the bovine oestral madness also involves the pre-viticultural aspect of Dionysus in taurine symbolism. Amongst the Indo-Aryans, the bull was the commonest metaphor for Soma,<sup>3</sup> and the sacral function of the bull amongst the Minoans obviously reinforced Indo-European traditions. It was apparently as a bull that Dionysus united with the sacral queen of Athens in her annual, ancient, winter rite of marriage, which took place in what was called the 'bull stable' (Aristotle, *Ath. Pol.* 3.5). The 'bellowing' or *mykema* of a bull seems to have been a metaphor for the imagined cry of the fruiting bodies of the mushroom as they burst from the earth or are harvested.<sup>4</sup> The metaphor perhaps derives from a pun on *mykema* and *mykes* or 'mushroom', words whose initial sounds would both have been written in the Mycenaean syllabary with the pictogram of a bull's head.

In addition to the supposed successful hybridization of the vine from primitive avatars, the art of viticulture also was symbolic of the taming and cultivation of the wild mushroom. The Greeks suspected that there was a similarity between the growth of mushrooms and the fermentation that transformed the juice of the vine's grapes into wine, a process that actually is caused by the

1. Kerényi, *Dionysos* 285 ff.

2. *Ibid.* 72.

3. Wasson, *Soma* 42.

4. Wasson, Ruck and Hofmann 118-121.

growth of microscopic lower fungi, the yeast. Thus a mushroom itself could be called metaphorically a 'ferment' or *zumoma* of the earth (ζύμωμα χθονός Nicander, *Alexipharmaca* 521), a word that implies an effervescing or boiling of corrupting digested matter. A similar corruption occurred in the tomb, which traditionally in Greek, as in modern languages, was a mouldy place (Homeric hymn 2.482; Sophocles, *Ajax* 1167). 'Mushroom', in fact, was apparently a metaphor for the 'burial coffin' or 'tomb' itself (Suidas s.v. μύκη). Thus, upon the body of the harvested grape could be grown the regeneration of the primitive god into his evolved form as the cultivated and refined intoxicant of civilized times, a rebirth that was clearly observable in the effervescing movement of the rotting ferment, as well as in the perceptible warmth generated by the process.

Here too, the art of viticulture was parallel to Demeter's gift of edible grains. Fungi are also responsible for 'leavened bread' or *zumites artos* (ζυμίτης ἄρτος), which in Greek is designated by the same metaphor of fermentation. The harvested grain similarly was host for the wild corruption. The association with the tomb would have been particularly obvious since the ancient method of cultivating the leaven would have corresponded to modern 'sourdough', a process of apparent rotting marked by a distinctive unpleasant smell. By comparison to the reddening corruption that overspreads iron, the dry grain too was host to a fungal 'rust' or ergot, *erysibe* (ἐρύσιβη), from which Demeter's analogue to wine was extracted for the Greater Eleusinian Mystery.

### THE RECONCILIATION WITH PRIMITIVISM

For the Greeks, evolution was not a stable process. Civilization and the arts of cultivation were continually in need of renewal, to found them again upon the healthy accord and reconciliation with their more primitive origins, the fertilizing source in the chthonic realm from which they grew into the Olympian age. If the primitive were not given its proper role in the evolving order of the world, there would be no place for mankind, which, by virtue of its mortality, participates in the non-Olympian contamination of the tomb. The dishonored earth, instead of supporting the foods of life, would yield only poisons and sterility from the rotting dead, whose angry spirits would hound the living with wild delusions. Such is the threat made by the loathsome and despised Erinyes of Aeschylus's *Oresteia*, the maddening, female Hell-hounds, whose presence pollutes Apollo's Delphic temple. The priestess likens them to the Harpies who defiled Phineus's food with their rotting excrement (*Eumenides* 50 ff.). When at

first they are dishonored in the civilized institution of the court at Athens, they threaten to drip tears of poison from their wounded hearts, polluting the earth with a stoppage of growth of both crops and mankind (780 ff.). Athena, however, cajoles them into accepting an honored place beneath the earth, and the threatened curse becomes a joyous benediction of fertility for the city.

Even the Olympians, moreover, would starve if mankind were not to fulfill its essential role of mediation between the two realms, converting the foods of the earth into the pure fragrance of burnt sacrifice rising to the heavens. Zeus himself, as in Aeschylus's *Prometheus*, would fall into mortality if he were not to cooperate with mankind's earth-born creator. Similarly it was a conspiracy of Zeus and earth, as announced in the Homeric hymn to Demeter, that led to the separation of the Olympian mother from her chthonic daughter and the eventual institution of the Mystery, whereby death itself was transmuted into a friendly visitor amongst mortals, the lord of riches, personified in his subterranean temple at Eleusis as the handsome youth who represented that very conspiracy, the primordial plan of Zeus.<sup>1</sup> Thus Demeter's first two reactions to her daughter's loss are to feed a child, not with food, but by anointing him with ambrosia and by inspiration, keeping him from the grievous witchcraft of worms burrowing in his flesh, and when that attempt to purify from mortality fails, similarly to deny all growth of mortal foods from the earth, until at last her own mother, who bore her into the Olympian realm, induces her to save the Olympians from starvation and accept back a chthonic Persephone, now pregnant and contaminated with the seminal foods of earth eaten in the tomb.

Reconciliation between the gods of the older and newer orders is, in fact, a common theme in Greek mythology, and the iconography of the deities themselves, as well as the rites of their worship, testifies to the conservative retention of very ancient, pre-Olympian aspects preserved and honored in their classical cults. Thus, for example, the pre-Indo-European goddess Athena, although reborn as an Olympian daughter of Zeus, still was associated with the transmuted symbols of her primordial identity. The Gorgon's head has been displaced, but is still worn, as indication of her role in triumphing over the chthonic queen, and the owl, her predatory night bird, has lost its meaning as the spirit responsible for her ecstatic possession, but persists as indication of the rational wisdom of the cultivated arts that she inspires. Amongst these was that of weaving, whose sinister, fateful symbolism was displaced upon the spider in the myth

1. C. Kerényi, *Eleusis: Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter* (Princeton University Press 1967) 169-174.

of her contest with Arachne, and ritually placated in the quadrennial presentation of a tapestry at the Panathenaic Festival, specially woven by a group of pre-nubile girls. Even the serpent, symbolic of the toxins of the earth, persists, but as her foster-child, responsible for the maddened deaths of others, maidens of the autochthonous dynasty at Athens.<sup>1</sup> In a similar manner, Demeter had non-Olympian manifestations, more akin to Persephone, as an Erinyes, the Black One, and, like the Gorgon Medusa, a centauress.<sup>2</sup> Often the pre-Olympian identity persists and is assimilated as an epithet, supposedly indicative of a beloved companion whom the deity inadvertently destroyed. Thus Athena murdered Pallas when distracted at play by a sign from her Olympian father, the aegis or serpent-fringed goatskin, which is part of Athena's attire. Similarly, Apollo was once Hyakinthos, the beloved pre-Olympian plant-god whom he displaced.

Such reconciliation indicates the essential participation of primitivism in an evolving world where humans are to have a role. In terms of agrarian realities, mankind, by virtue of its mortality, is contaminated with the rotting dead matter it must slaughter or harvest for food, a putrefaction that is both the potential cause of pestilence and yet the honored, stinking nutriment that sustains the generations rooted upon the earth. The affinity of the dead and their living counterpart can also be sensed in the culinary arts, another evolutionary sign of civilized mankind's progress from primitivism. The 'ripening' of fruits, by which they softened toward rottenness, was a kind of 'digestion', a process that was hastened, in its refined way, by 'cooking' or 'baking' (πέσσω). The meat of the sacrificial animal, moreover, was prepared in a manner that recapitulated the supposed ontogeny of both the beast and the cultivated arts, the primordial organs grilled first, in primitive fashion, before the parts that grew later were boiled as stew. In Orphic doctrine, mankind inherited original sin from the Titans, who opposed the evolution of Dionysus into the assimilated son of Zeus and feasted atavistically upon his flesh, cooked in perversion of the culinary arts. Zeus rescued the primordial organs and regenerated his son in an Olympian identity.

1. Robert Lyster, Symbolic Elements in the Cult of Athena, *History of Religions*, 5 (1) (Summer 1965) 133-163.

2. Kerenyi, *Eleusis* 30-33.

## THE MAKING OF WINE

In the making of wine, the god's experience was analogous to mankind's journey toward redemption through the mouldering tomb. As in the scene depicted on Homer's shield of Achilles (*Iliad* 18.561-572), the cultivated fruit of the vine was harvested to the music of lamentation, for the god had died. His slaughtered body was then dismembered in the wine press, a crime that the harvesters sought to ascribe to agents other than themselves. In art, it was traditionally satyrs who trod upon the grapes, and, in actual practice, the treaders seem to have worn masks.<sup>1</sup> The juice, that was the god's blood, flowed into urns placed like burial chambers beneath the earth, where the subterranean environment maintained the proper temperature for the fungal growth of fermentation.

While the spirit of the god was being cultivated in the otherworld, he was absent from the living. The months of his sojourn in the tomb are marked in the Greek lands by a winter-time profusion of wild flowers upon the mountains, although the cold is too intense to favor the growth of garden varieties or vegetables. This was the time when the atavistic Dionysus prevailed. It was the time for the phallic processions of the rural Dionysia celebrated in the villages, primitive rites dating back to the period before the incorporation of the god's worship in the civic calendar under the popular tyrant Peisistratus. This was the time too for the enactment of the primordial sacred marriage and for the ecstatic ceremonies of the 'maenadic' *lenai* at Athens, when the women urged the god through his winter sleep, worshipping him at his effigy composed of the empty robes and mask that awaited his return.<sup>2</sup> Comedy, the 'revel song', originally was the only drama performed at this period, and appropriately so, for the phallic dancers described an inverted world, given over to libidinous desires that satirized the mighty and reshaped society according to the whims of baser fantasies.

When the wine was at last ready at the February festival of the Anthesteria, the urns were opened, and the god's spirit was reborn as an infant. The graves of the dead released their spirits as well at this time, and for the three days of the festival, ghosts roamed abroad in Athens. The Anthesteria was the time of reconciliation between the two realms of the living and the dead. It was then

1. Goffredo Bendinelli, *La vite e il vino: Monumenti antichi in Italia* (Milan 1931) fig. 86, 172-173, 251-253, 264. See also Kerenyi, *Dionysos* 65 ff. Satyrs are sometimes replaced by Erotes in

late antiquity (as in the sacrifice of *Psyche* mentioned above, note 1, p 189).

2. Kerenyi, *Dionysos* 281 ff.

that the maddened Orestes was supposed to have arrived at Athens and been offered hospitality, despite his polluted condition. That event was recalled in the special arrangements at the festival for drinking from separate pitchers and eating at small private tables, so that the hospitality that was extended to the visiting ghosts thereafter would not contaminate the food of the living by the putrefaction that clings to those who come from the grave. This was the time too when the hounding Erinyes were placated and honored as the Eumenides, the Blessed Ones. In preparation for the encounter with the dead at this festival, the Athenians purified themselves symbolically of the contamination they shared with the other realm by chewing upon pieces of *rhamnos*, a shrub whose laxative properties purged their bodies of chthonic pollutants.

This was a time also for honoring an earlier age of mankind, for the Anthesteria commemorated those who died in the Great Flood that Zeus sent against the evil primitive race, after which the sole surviving couple, descendants of the first creator, repopulated the world with its present people by throwing the stones of earth behind them. Amongst the sons of that couple was Orestheus, who discovered and planted the first vine, and Amphictyon, who first received Dionysus and learned from him how to tame the toxins of wine, and Hellen, the eldest, after whom the Hellenic race took its name. The primordial race that the Hellenes replaced was the Pelasgian, a pre-Indo-European people of whom remnants survived into classical times. Their sin, for which Zeus sent the Flood, was to have attempted to contaminate the Olympian by feeding him the flesh of a boy, Nyctimus, a creature of the night, as though Zeus were the lord of the other world. Zeus changed them all into wolves and assimilated that more sinister identity, as in the case of the other deities we have mentioned, by assuming the epithet *Lykaios*, the 'wolfish'.

An earlier age at Athens itself was also placated at the Anthesteria by a curious rite of swinging in swings, supposedly in commemoration of Erigone. It was her father who first received Dionysus and his gift of wine in Attica, but when he shared it with his fellow men, they saw double and thought themselves poisoned, for which they killed and buried him beneath a pine tree. Erigone found his body and hanged herself from the tree in grief. The swinging thereafter at the festival recalled that initial misunderstanding about the civilized nature of wine.

Reconciliation with the dead and the past at the Anthesteria also took the form of an initiation into the experience of wine for the very young, the children of three or four years of age. They were the personification of the young god, and as they cavorted among the revellers and the ghosts, the continuity of

mortal lineage through the transformations of the tomb was sensed as analogous to the god's fermenting gestation and rebirth out of death.

The birth of the wine, moreover, was symbolic of the god's triumph over his own more primitive identity. The satyrs, who had presided at the treading of the harvested grapes and who had inverted the norms of civilized behaviour in the maenadic revels of the winter, were the natural enemies of the cultivated god, for goats, whose hircine nature they shared,<sup>1</sup> were thought to be particularly invidious to the vine because of their dangerous tendency to graze on its young shoots (Vergil, *Georgics* 2.380).<sup>2</sup> Now the goat yielded to Dionysus. The goatskin was filled with wine, and as a test of the triumph of sobriety over drunkenness, the revellers at the Anthesteria competed in a contest, attempting to balance themselves upon a greased wineskin (Pollux 9.21). There was also a contest of drinking, for which the prize was a goatskin (Aristophanes, *Acharnians* 1224 *cum schol.*). It was the goat too that was the special sacrificial victim for Dionysus. The song for its slaughter, the *tragoidia*, was perhaps the origin of tragedy.<sup>3</sup> In the next month the Athenians would celebrate the Great Dionysia, a drama festival that originally involved only the tragic poets, without the comedy later imported from the Lenaea. The Dionysia was a great celebration of Athens as a center of culture in the Greek world, and it revealed the higher inspiration of Dionysus in his civilized form.

Just as in the making of wine the two natures of Dionysus were reconciled, so too in the wine itself was the primordial deity still honored. To understand this incorporation of the pre-viticultural deity in wine, we must summarize evidence that I have presented more fully elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> The Greeks, as well as the Romans (Pliny *N. H.* 14.29), had the peculiar custom of diluting their wine with several parts of water before drinking it. Since they could not have fortified their wines with pure alcohol from distillation (a process not known until the alchemists discovered 'aqua vitae' around 1100 A.D.), the alcoholic content of

1. Satyrs are often confused or joined with Sileni, from whom they sometimes appear to have acquired equine characteristics, in addition to the goat-like nature that they share with Pan. All of these figures represent primitive spirits of the woodland. Like the centaurs, the Sileni were also inspired sources of knowledge and their leader was entrusted with the teaching of the child Dionysus in the wilderness of Nysa, just as Chiron was said to have educated heroes. The satyrs, on

the other hand, share the centaurs' inclination toward the uninhibited satisfaction of libidinous drives, especially under the influence of wine.

2. Kerenyi, *Dionysos* 322.

3. Walter Burkert, *Greek Tragedy and Sacrificial Ritual*, *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies*, 7 (1966) 92 ff. See also Kerenyi, *Dionysos* 333.

4. Wasson, Ruck, and Hofmann 89 ff.

their wines could have been derived only from natural fermentation, which is limited to about fourteen percent by the pickling effect of the alcohol itself upon the growing yeast which produces it as a by-product of the fungal activity upon the sugars of the juice. Greek wine, therefore, should have had only very mild intoxicating properties after the customary three- or fourfold dilution with water. Such, however, was not the case. We even hear of a wine that could stand eightfold dilution (Pliny, *H. N.* 14.53), an actual historical survival of a wine that in the mythical tradition required twenty parts of water (Homer, *Odyssey* 9.208-211) and was associated with the story of the Cyclops, a primitive one-eyed creature who figured in mystery traditions and Asiatic shamanism.<sup>1</sup> Undiluted wine was supposed to cause permanent brain damage. Nor should we assume that the Greeks diluted their wines so that they might safely drink excessive quantities, for just four 'little cups' of diluted wine are said to have been sufficient to induce a deep intoxication (Eubulus, fr. 94). The frequent depictions of revellers in art and literature, furthermore, should leave no doubt that the Greeks did indeed get drunk and that the purpose of drinking was, in fact, to become inebriated. Obviously, the alcoholic content of their diluted drink could not have been the sole cause.

As we have seen, the Greeks recapitulated the evolutionary history of Dionysus by incorporating the resinous taste of one of the god's pre-viticultural antecedents in their wine. It is only to be expected that they would also have assimilated other atavistic versions of the cultivated god into the fermented drink. Alcohol itself was unknown as a substance, and the affinity of the ferment to other intoxicants would have suggested itself by their similar effects upon the mind, although wine had the mark of civilization, as opposed to the wild, natural growths, and was gentler, for Dionysus had taught mankind how to tame it through dilution. Spices, unguents, and herbs were, in fact, added to Greek wines, either in the fermentation or at the ceremony of dilution before drinking. It is these additives that must account for the special inebriating properties of Greek wines, which in some cases were actually more hallucinogens than alcoholic intoxicants (Aristophanes, *Wasps* 12 ff., 213).

As sign of such an assimilation of wilder versions of the god, the quality of wine was referred to as its 'flower' or *anthos*, a metaphor that persists today,

1. The Cyclopes were apparently a Greek version of the fabulous people known as Arimaspeans, a name that designates them as Monophthalmoi or 'One-eyes' in Scythian. The Arimaspeans were involved in shamanic rites that

were proselytized in Greece by the priest and poet Aristeas of Proconnesus. See E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (University of California, Berkeley 1951) 141.



without the same meaning, in our speaking of a wine's 'bouquet'. Dionysus himself was called the Flower God, *Antheus* and *Euanthes*, epithets that gave his name to the *Anthesteria* festival. The tradition of wine as a vinous potion persists in modern Greek, where the demotic word for wine is *krasi*, literally the 'mixture'.

### THE MAD KING AND THE GOD

Pentheus, as the king of the pre-viticultural kingdom in the *Bacchae*, has a peculiar characteristic which perhaps we now can begin to understand. He is mad. Cadmus first notices it as Pentheus makes his entrance, rushing on stage to interrupt the old men's plan to join the mountain revel. He is 'all aflutter' or distraught with passion (ὥς ἐπτόηται 214), and throughout the play his violent emotions and stage presence are a visual contrast to the calm of the Asiatic deity of the vine. As the prophet Teiresias tells him, he is 'witless' (ἐν τοῖς λόγοισι δ' οὐκ ἔνεισί σοι φρένες 269), and his meaningless words have only the semblance of sense. At the close of their violent controversy, the seer sums it up: Pentheus is a babbling idiot (μῶρα γὰρ μῶρος λέγει 369); all along, he has been 'out of his mind' and now he has become 'raving mad' (ὥς οὐκ οἶσθα ποῦ ποτ' εἶ λόγων. μέμηνας ἤδη· καὶ πρὶν ἐξέστης φρενῶν 358-359).

In the context of the play, this madness is presented as a pre-viticultural state of mind. Whereas Pentheus is senseless, the mentality that wine induces, as Teiresias explains, is inspired with divine knowledge, a mania that underlies the appropriately so-called 'mantic' arts (τό γὰρ . . . μανιῶδες μαντικὴν πολλὴν ἔχει, 298-299), as well as the panic 'fear that sets an army aflutter' (φόβος διεπτόησε . . . μανία δὲ καὶ τοῦτ' ἐστὶ Διονύσου πάρα 304-305) and embraes them for the conflict, whereas Pentheus's bravura as the play develops will merely demonstrate his witless state. Wine, moreover, is the superlative anodyne, as we have already noted, whereas Pentheus is the 'Sufferer' and is so lacking in the mania of clairvoyance that he cannot even see what his name so clearly warns him will be his role in his intended conflict with Dionysus (367 ff.). 'You are mad in the most painful way', Teiresias tells him (μαίνῃ γὰρ ὥς ἄλγιστα 326).

Not only, however, does Pentheus have a mentality contrary to the effects of wine, but his pain is incurable and his suffering was apparently induced by ingesting some other 'drug' (κοῦτε φαρμάκοις ἄκη λάβοις ἄν οὔτ' ἄνευ τούτων νοσεῖς 326-327). It was traditional to believe that ill humour could be traced

to a maddening drug,<sup>1</sup> but in this context there is certainly more than convention involved.

This ill-humoured opponent of the vine, moreover, has no less a botanic identity than the god. It is repeatedly mentioned in the drama that Pentheus is the son of the 'serpent man' Echion (213, 265, etc.), a creature 'sown' and 'harvested' (ὅς τὸ γηγενὲς δράκοντος ἔσπειρ' "Οφεος ἐν γαίᾳ θέρος 1025-1026; ὅς τὸ Θηβαίων γένος ἔσπειρα καὶ ξήμησα κάλλιστον θέρος 1314-1315) from the primordial crop that Cadmus had planted in founding the city of Thebes. The seeds for that first sowing of the Theban plain were the fangs of the deadly serpent who was the previous inhabitant of the site for the city, and the crop that sprouted from them fought amongst themselves until only five remained, the so-called Sown Men or Spartoi, of whom Echion was one. Like his grandson Pentheus, the aboriginal serpent can be expected to have derived his ill temper from toxic plants, for it was by eating evil drugs that serpents were thought to acquire their grievous bile (Homer, *Iliad* 22.94; Vergil, *Aeneid* 2.741; Pliny, *N. H.* 22.95). Serpents also contaminated other plants by their presence. Thus mushrooms were said to suck up the venom of serpents in the ground beneath them (Nicander, *Alexipharmaca* 521-525), and only after serpents had gone into hibernation was it safe to gather them (Pliny, *N. H.* 22.95). By one account, Dionysus discovered wine when he noticed a serpent eating grapes and in accordance with a prophecy improvised the first wine press (Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 12.293-362).<sup>2</sup> Snakes, moreover, resemble the trailing growth of the vine and ivy. Because of their cold-blooded nature, they had a particular affinity with the latter and were twined into the ivy wreaths of the maenads (Plutarch, *Alexander* 2.6), who tore them to pieces in their winter revels.<sup>3</sup>

The role of the serpent in pre-Indo-European religion is well attested by the so-called snake goddesses of the Minoan culture, where it probably figured, like the predatory bird and magical plants, as representative of the possessing chthonic spirit in shamanic rites of sacred marriage. The serpentine form of Echion associates him with the symbolism of the autochthonous dynasties at other Greek cities and with the earth-born creatures whom Zeus eventually subdued in establishing his Olympian realm. The myth of Cadmus's coming to Thebes, sowing the Spartoi, and betrothal of Pentheus's mother Agave to Echion is analogous to the traditions about the advent of viticul-

1. For references, see E. R. Dodds, *Euripides' Bacchae* (Oxford 1944, 1960<sup>2</sup>) 112.

2. The myth, although recorded in a late

author, seems to preserve elements of a very ancient tradition. See Kerenyi *Dionysos*, 57-60.

3. *Ibid.* 60-62.

ture, involving a sacred marriage and mediation with toxic primitivism in the establishment of culture and civilization. Matrilocality and matrilineality, which are indicative of primordial times, have been replaced by Pentheus's patrilineality and patrilocality, and the successful evolution toward the Olympian age is symbolized by Cadmus's marriage to Harmonia, the offspring of Aphrodite and Ares, who was also the parent of the primordial serpent whom Cadmus destroyed. The success of this assimilation of cultures and transmutation of symbolic forms was indicated by the attendance of the Olympians themselves at the marriage feast of the city's founder.

It is perhaps significant, however, that Cadmus in the *Bacchae* is now old, and the rejuvenation that would have come with the acceptance of Dionysus's new rites of cultivation is denied him in the play. Instead, as we shall see, the city becomes unfounded and reverts to primitivism as the pre-Olympian nature of Pentheus asserts itself.

## DOUBLE BIRTH AND THE GOD'S SURROGATE

In this pre-viticultural kingdom, Dionysus has not yet been assimilated, and thus the fundamental dualism of his nature is misunderstood by everyone except the Asiatic devotees, who have come with him from the lands that have already accepted his gift of wine. The essence of this dualism involves the mystery of his double birth, by which death becomes a gestation for regeneration and evolution. The chorus of Asiatic women describes how the infant was taken from the womb of his dead mother and washed in the Theban spring of the maenadic Dirce. Zeus then took him for his thigh, calling, 'Come, Dithyrambus, enter this male womb of mine' ('Ιθι, Διθύραμβ', ἐμὸν ἄρσενα τάνδε βᾶθι νηδύν 526-527), thus giving him the sacred name which the Greeks interpreted as meaning that Dionysus had come twice to the gates of birth.<sup>1</sup> It is by means of this second birth that Dionysus is assimilated into Indo-European traditions, and the Asiatic wine cult became incorporated into the civilized era over which Zeus reigns. The myth is paralleled in one of the oldest of the Vedic upanishads,

1. This derivation of Dithyrambus, although well attested in antiquity and obviously implied by this passage in the *Bacchae*, is apparently false. The name may be another non-Indo-European word assimilated into Greek and can

be compared to a Phrygian word for the 'tomb', thus an epithet of Dionysus as the Lord of the Tomb. See Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *Dithyramb, Tragedy, and Comedy* (Oxford 1962, second edition revised by T. B. L. Webster) 7-9.

which states that the gods took Soma and put him into the right thigh of the supreme sky-god Indra.<sup>1</sup>

For the Thebans, however, only the primordial half of the dualism is accepted. Pentheus, like his mother and sisters (26 ff.), ridicules Dionysus's supposed Olympian birth. They all claim that Semele's infant perished in her womb, destroyed by the thunderbolt that was her punishment for lying about an imaginary affair with Zeus in order to cover her shame for an illicit pregnancy from a mortal (242 ff.). Even Teiresias does not understand the second birth, for although he stresses that Dionysus is indeed a god and the son of Zeus, he attempts to rationalize the mystery by explaining that Dionysus was actually born only once. It was simply a confusion of words that gave rise to the idea that he was sown into the 'thigh' (*meros*) of Zeus. Instead Zeus made an illusory double of the infant out of the layer of upper air and gave it as a 'surety' (*homeros*) to the care of his jealous wife as assurance of his future fidelity, while the real Dionysus was apparently entrusted to the nurture of others (286 ff.).<sup>2</sup> Teiresias's explanation, however, misses the point and deprives the god of his transmutation into his civilized aspect. Instead, Hera, like a primordial great goddess, tends her delusion and seems to dominate Zeus, and the real infant, who was born only once, has yet to evolve from primitivism, for the creatures to whom he was entrusted are traditionally the satyrs and maenadic nurses and brides of Nysa, the wild place of his youth, before the discovery of wine. Even Cadmus shares the Theban doubt about the mystery, but he urges that they at least appear to accept it, for it is a noble lie that will benefit the dynasty and his dead daughter's reputation (332 ff.).

It is by means of the second birth, however, that the god acquires his special role in alleviating the sufferings of mankind, while nourishing the spirit with the superior mania of inspiration. The death of his primitive self is the essential precedent for his evolution into Olympian times, and by being born both of the mother in the earth and of the heavenly father, he is the appropriate mediator between the Olympian gods and mortals, who, like him, experience the contamination of the chthonic realm.

Teiresias attempts to explain this role of mediator in mankind's sufferings as an act of sacrifice, whereby Dionysus, although a god, offers himself in libation to the other gods so that humans, through him, can experience the bless-

1. See Dodds, *Bacchae* 78.

2. Unfortunately a lacuna in the text appears to occur after line 293. Gilbert Mur-

ray suggests the indicated completion on the basis of the myth as recorded in Apollodorus 3.4.3.

ings of wine, its ability to end pain and cause sleep and forgetfulness of daily troubles (οὗτος θεοῖσι σπένδεται θεὸς γεγώς, ὥστε διὰ τοῦτον τὰ γὰθ' ἀνθρώπους ἔχειν 284-285). Dionysus is identical with the 'liquid potion of the clustered grape' which he 'discovered' (279), and it is only by sacrifice of himself that he can offer his gift of wine.

Just as Dionysus came twice to the gates of birth, his act of sacrifice, therefore, must bring him doubly into death, both in the abandonment of his own atavistic precedents and in the form of his cultivated self. As we have seen, such a double sacrifice was ritualized in the actual tending of the vine's harvest through its winter fermentation. It is the mystery of this sacrifice that the god will reveal to the doubting Thebans in the *Bacchae*. The play enacts the consecration of Pentheus via a repetition of the double birth as the god's surrogate, in whose person Dionysus must, as always, die in order to free himself from his darker antithesis and grant the blessings of madness through his gift of wine.

The musical accompaniment for the dancing of the choral women in the play is a constant reminder that the story does, in fact, enact this pattern of assimilation and sacrifice, for the instrument they play is the tympanum, whose connotations they identify at the beginning of the drama in their first dance, the parodos ode. There, they describe accurately and in detail the double birth of Dionysus and present it as analogous to the Cretan birth of Zeus himself, the event whereby the Indo-European god, in like manner, assimilated the pre-existent male deity of Minoan religion (89 ff.). The sound of the tympanum indicates that the evolutionary rebirth is taking place and that Dionysus brings redemption from the primitivism of the kingdom where he was first born, for it was at the Cretan birth of Zeus that the ecstatic Corybantes invented the tympanum to cover the cries of the newly born infant, and the same drum was used in Corybantic rites to cure madness (Aristophanes, *Wasps* 119 *cum schol.*). There was also a tradition, of which Euripides was apparently aware (*Cyclops* 3), that the same sound cured Dionysus himself of a madness sent upon him by Hera in his primordial state.<sup>1</sup>

## THE FIRST BIRTH

The first birth is from the earth. It will be marked by thunder and earthquake, and symbolized by the simultaneous burst of fire upon Semele's tomb, which from the beginning of the play has been seen still smoking from the time that

1. See Dodds, *Bacchae* 83-84.

Dionysus was wrenched from his mother's womb. It is this birth that will ratify Pentheus as the primitive aspect of the Dionysian duality.

Characteristic of that role, Pentheus is first introduced as a hunter, symbolic of the pre-agrarian gathering rites of the winter revels. It was as a hunter that Dionysus manifested himself then, as Zagreus, the 'one who catches his prey alive', a chthonic child of the queen in the otherworld. In these rites, Dionysus was both the hunter and the hunted, for the maenadic women sought the wild plants and animals whose spirit would possess them in ecstatic rapture.

Thus, when Pentheus first enters on stage, he announces that he intends to 'hunt' (228) the Theban maenads on the mountain. In the ensuing choral stasimon, the Asiatic devotees of the god identify the kingdom of such a mad and senseless hunter as a land that does not know the joyous and pain-relieving festivities of the Dionysian vine and they pray to return to their eastern homelands. The next episode begins with the presentation of Pentheus's captured prey (434 ff.), and Pentheus, as hunter, taunts Dionysus, whom he has 'netted' (451) alive, as an effeminate weakling who 'hunts' (459) only those same Aphrodisian joys that the Asiatics have just extolled.

As the two opponents size each other up for the coming conflict, their uncanny similarity begins to emerge, for Pentheus, as well as the disguised god, is a Dionysus. Thus the prophet, who actually was first born in Thebes, identifies Asia as his homeland, from which place he has brought the rites of Dionysus, the son of Zeus. When Pentheus facetiously asks if they have a Zeus there who makes new gods, Dionysus replies that it was here in Thebes that the union with Semele took place. The different appearances of the prophet and Pentheus also cannot distinguish between the two, for Pentheus seeks to know what the god looks like, only to find that Dionysus apparently can look like whatever he wishes (477). He is in fact standing right there, although Pentheus cannot see him, for Dionysus is sane, and the other mad (500 ff.). Just as Pentheus had begun the episode by inquiring into the mysterious prophet's identity, Dionysus now, in structural response as the scene closes, claims that Pentheus himself does not know his own identity, to which the mad king unwittingly demonstrates the truth by stupidly citing his chthonic lineage from Echion and his name, whose meaning as 'Sufferer' he clearly does not comprehend.

With the two thus joined by the uncanny opposition of their dissimilar temperaments, the play proceeds to enact the consecration of the Dionysian surrogate. The first stage is the confirmation of his earth-born nature by apparently simultaneous miracles within the palace and amongst the Theban women on the mountain.

The choral dance that introduces this episode contrasts the redeeming second birth of Dionysus with the mad earth-begetting of Pentheus. The Asiatic women describe how Zeus took the infant from the flaming lightning that had blasted Semele and then quenched the fire in the Theban spring of Dirce before receiving the embryonic child into his thigh to gestate for the second birth (519 ff.). Thebes, however, refuses the 'grape-clustered joy of Dionysus' wine-vine' (τὰν βοτρυώδη Διονύσου χάριν οἴνας 534-535), and, instead, Pentheus is demonstrating the madness we have already seen – Pentheus, of chthonic lineage and begot of a serpent, the offspring that earth-born Echion once planted, no mortal child, but a wild monster, a deadly earthy creature that is the god's antagonist (537 ff.). They pray to Dionysus to come, significantly, from Olympus to rescue them from this primitive madness, and the god complies, calling to them from within the palace, where the hunter had taken his prey. The god manifests himself as Bromius, the 'Thunderer'. He shatters the foundations of the building and sets the palace afire with lightning, while, as in his own first begetting, the tomb of Semele bursts into flames.

This event has the unmistakable indications of a birth from the earth. Like the sacred marriage of the queen at Athens to the primordial Dionysus, the place where the miracle is enacted is the bull stables of the royal palace, and the thundering earthquake traditionally marks the emergence of autochthonous creatures from the ground.<sup>1</sup> In the theater, it would have been staged to the striking of the 'thunder gong', the same instrument that in the Mystery at Eleusis announced the birth of the divine child Brimos from the nether realm in the midst of a blinding flash of light.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the ensuing episode, Dionysus, still disguised as the prophet, emerges from the palace to detail what has happened within. The mad Pentheus, with deluded sight, mistook a bull in the stables for the prophet, whom he thought he was roping and confining. It was at this moment that the earthquake and the fire on Semele's tomb had occurred (622 ff.). Ironically, Pentheus thinks that the house itself has caught fire and he calls for his servants to quench the flames with the same water from the spring of Dirce that had doused the burning infant Dionysus. Then, thinking that the prophet had taken

1. Thus a bellowing, as of a bull, and a shaking of the ground occur when Medea cuts the magical root with which she will anoint Jason (Apollonius Rhodius 3.864-865). The same bellowing sound occurs when Perseus 'harvested' the Medusa's head (Eustathius, on Homer, *Iliad*

2.498). The autochthonous Erichthonius/Erechtheus was named the 'bellowing' (cf. *erechthō*, *orechthō*).

2. See Kerenyi, *Eleusis* 84. The instrument was called the *echeion*.

advantage of the confusion to escape, he rushed into the house, where he mistook a hallucination for the prophet and entered into combat with thin air. Through all of this, the prophet emphasizes that he himself maintained his calm composure (622, 636), while Pentheus vainly struggled and rushed about. It is also clear that for the prophet too the events within the palace were only the appearance of what they seemed (ὥς ἔμοιγε φαίνεται, δόξαν λέγω 629), but unlike Pentheus, he could correctly interpret what was happening as manifestations of Bromius, whom he identifies by the primordial epithets of Bacchus and Bacchius. When Pentheus finally emerges from the palace to find the prophet still quietly waiting for him, his first words are that he has 'suffered terribly' (πέπονθα δεινά, 642), the confirmation of the role that he is too mad to understand. In contrast, the prophet claims that he himself was freed from the suffering that Pentheus had intended to inflict upon him by the 'somebody . . . who makes grow the clustered vine' (649 ff.).

The chthonic birth had been sensed also on Cithaeron. The herdsman who has just returned from there tells how Pentheus's mother Agave had heard the bellowing of bulls and waked the other Theban women. There too, as in the bull stable of the palace, the connotations are of a primordial sacred marriage, for Euripides repeatedly describes the madness that has driven them to the mountain as the oestral heat, the poisoning sting of the 'gadfly' or *oistros* (32, 119, 665, 1229) that inflames the womb, the organ, as it was thought, that made women in particular prone to hysteria and uncontrollable longings.<sup>1</sup> This association of the gadfly's sting with sexual madness is a traditional metaphor in Greek. In Apollonius Rhodius (3.276 ff.), Eros himself is likened to a gadfly amidst a herd of heifers as he enters a room filled with women and shoots Medea with an arrow whose poison, like a flame, drives her madly into love for Jason. The myth of the gadfly itself involves Zeus's affair with a primordial version of Hera in the person of Io, whom Hera transformed into a cow, like her own pre-Olympian self (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5.330) as indicated by her ancient epithet, Boopis, the 'Bovine', still retained on Olympus. The gadfly was supposedly the ghost of the 'all-seeing' (Panoptes) herdsman who tended the cow, goading it, as in Aeschylus's *Prometheus*, into ecstatic wanderings until a Zeus of the Olympian age calmed her madness with the touch of his hand, to beget the later race of heroes. The gadfly was also known by a name that apparently is the opposite of the primordial herdsman's epithet, for it was called

1. Bennett Simon, *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece: The Classical Roots of Modern Psychiatry* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca 1978) 238 ff.



*muops*, the 'close-eyed', by which name it was identified with a plant (Pseudo-Plutarch, *de Fluviis* 22.5) said to grow in a river, that itself figured as another chthonic lover of a heifer-like maiden in the myth of Deianeira (Sophocles, *Trachiniae*).

The sexual nature of the women's madness is, of course, what Pentheus has all along suspected, but, as in the case of Semele, he has mistaken the spiritual aspect of the maenadic rapture. The numerous depictions of Dionysian revels in vase paintings can leave no doubt that the Greeks of Euripides' audience were well aware that the women cavorting on the mountains were indeed engaged in sexual experience, but that Pentheus was a fool to think that it could be seen, for the eroticism was metaphysical and the lovers spiritual. Thus on vases we see the women wakened by ithyphallic satyrs and romping with them, or dancing, often nude, before the thyrsos-bearing god, or presenting hares, symbolic of sexuality, as their catch in the hunt.

What the herdsman saw, as he tells Pentheus, was not the suspected drunken orgy, but a model of decorum. The maenads had fallen asleep in three groups, apparently exhausted from their ecstatic dancing. The trifold grouping was traditional,<sup>1</sup> and apparently corresponded to differences in their ages, 'the young, the old, and maidens still unwed' (694), each of which is led by one of the sisters of the dead Semele (681-682). Since children do not appear in depictions of maenads on vases, and indeed would be unlikely to have experienced the oestral madness, the age distinctions must refer to their stages of female maturity, and the 'young' are mentioned as contrast to the 'old' and would include women well into the age of child-bearing,<sup>2</sup> as distinct from those beyond that stage of life. Presumably, the trifold grouping pertained to the generic roles enacted by the maenads as the god's 'brides' and 'nurses' and 'hunters'.

The regressive symbolism of these women, who have been goaded into the wilderness, away from their civilized task at the loom (118), is apparent in their clothing, for they are wearing the traditional maenadic attire of animal skins, girded with serpents, a form of dress that symbolically imbues them with the

1. Tripart grouping is associated with Theban maenadism. See Albert Henrichs, Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, 82 (1978) 137-138.

2. Dodds, who follows Bruhn, interprets the grouping thus as only twofold: 'young and old - and unmarried girls among them', *Bacchae* 163. Maenads, of course, are depicted with the Dionysian child, but not with their own.

The traditions, mentioned above, about maenads who ate their children during the revels probably are not to be understood literally, but in terms of ritual impersonations, with the child either the gathered Dionysian infant or, as in the scene described by the herdsman, the wild animals and serpents that the women 'mothered' before rending limb from limb for the ritual raw meal.

animal's spirit. In this bestial transformation, they were seen cuddling animals like children or actually suckling them, apparently having abandoned in the city their own newly born babies (702).

They have evidently been gathering wild plants, for they crown themselves with wreaths of ivy, *smilax* or 'bryony', and leaves of oak (702-703). The latter two plants, like the ivy, have regressive symbolism. *Smilax* is an evergreen creeper that resembles ivy, with clusters of scarlet grape-like berries, which are said to be similar to the fruit of plants called the 'wild grape' and the 'wild vine', as well as nightshade (Theophrastus, *H. P.* 3.18.11). Like ivy, it was a wild plant, not cultivated, and thought to be parasitic, clinging even more than ivy to its host (*ibid.* 7.8.1). It was a common substitute for ivy in maenadic rites, but in some way deficient (Pliny, *N. H.* 16.155), probably because it lacked ivy's reputed effect upon the mind. The oak had similar connotations of primitivism. It was associated with a primordial Zeus, whose sacred grove at Dodona was tended by a barefooted priesthood of prophets who slept upon the ground (Homer, *Iliad* 16.233). Before the arts of agriculture evolved, mankind was supposed to have fed upon acorns, the fruit of this sacred grove (Vergil, *Georgics* 1.147-149). Acorns were also thought to be the ancient food of the Pelasgian, pre-Indo-European people of Arcadia (Adespota, fr. 67 Page; Herodotus 1.67; Hippolytus, *Refutatio Omnium Haeresium* 5.17), and the homilistic phrase, 'to be born from the legendary oak or stone' (Homer, *Odyssey* 19.163 *cum schol.*; Plato, *Apology* 34d, *Republic* 544d), seems to have implied primordial origin in pre-civilized times.

What the herdsman next saw was an apotheosis of the pre-agricultural age, a reversion to the fabled Golden Age, when the earth yielded up nourishment without mankind's toil of cultivation. Someone struck the rock with her *thyrsos*, and water flowed from the ground. Another placed the *narthex* upon the earth, and the god sent up a natural spring of 'wine', while others scratched the ground and found 'milk'. After the miraculous appearance of these three natural springs, the *thyrsoi* themselves are transfigured, with streams of honey dripping from the leaves of ivy. Thus it was in primitive times, as Vergil claims, before the streams of wine were stopped and the honey shaken from the leaves, so that mankind henceforth would have to work for his livelihood (*Georgics* 131 ff.).

The central role of the *thyrsos/narthex* in this apotheosis suggests, as one would expect, that the women in this wild place are gathering foods, instead of tending crops or herds. In the context of this play, where the gift of Dionysus is consistently designated by phrases descriptive of the clustered grape that is fruit of the tended vine, it is significant that here it is simply 'wine' that flows

naturally from the earth, without the need of fermentation. *Oinos*, in fact, can be generic in Greek for any intoxicant. Thus Herodotus, for example, can speak of beer as a 'wine made from barley', as distinguished from 'vine wine' (2.77). 'Milk' too is easily metaphoric and can designate the milky sap of plants (Theophrastus, *H. P.* 6.3.4), or even wine, as the 'milk of Aphrodite' (Aristophanes, fr. 596). It is perhaps also significant that Euripides, in this description of the women's activity, speaks of 'swarms of milk' (γάλατος ἔσμουός 710), a strange metaphor,<sup>1</sup> suggestive of bees, as if what the women actually were doing was gathering the essence of flowers. Bees, moreover, have a special significance in this ethnobotanic context, for, like the gadfly, they are stinging insects and therefore poisonous, but they seem to be able to transform the poisons, which they must have derived from flowers, into honey, a nourishment akin to serpent's venom, but sweet and non-toxic.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in this Golden Age, even the poisonous ivy leaves gathered into the *thyrsos* yield honey. Honey, moreover, seems to have been associated with the Minoan predecessor of the viticultural Dionysus, and it is related to the common word in Greek for 'intoxicate', probably indicating the role of mead as a precedent for wine.<sup>3</sup>

In Pentheus's kingdom, however, the blessed age of primitivism is not allowed to express itself as a function of evolution, and thus, instead of renewing civilization, it pollutes and destroys it. The women, after the gathering ceremony, had entered into the maenadic madness, calling upon Dionysus with his mystery name as the chthonic Iacchus and as Bromius, the 'Thunderer', and the whole mountain, thereupon, had become transformed, together with its beasts, into constant motion. This is the blessed madness that the Asiatic maenads had extolled at the conclusion of their *parados* dance (135-169). There, they had described the god's epiphany amongst them, in the midst of the primal land flowing with milk and wine and honey, as Bromius, leading the hunt for the goat to be eaten raw and possessing their leader with a shamanic frenzy. When the repressive Pentheus intrudes upon the idyllic scene through the presence of his spying herdsmen, it is clear, to all but him, that the corollary of the blessing is the danger of dishonored primitivism, and that he and his kingdom will have a role as the tragic surrogate. When the herdsmen decide to 'hunt' (719) the maenads to please their master, they discover that there is another

1. Dodds, following Elmsley, calls the metaphor absurd and derives ἔσμός from ἐγμι (instead of ἔζομαι) so that the phrase means 'springing jets' of milk: *Bacchae* 164. Thus also Liddell, Scott/Jones. In compounds, how-

ever, the word has connotations of bees and I suspect that a melissaeian metaphor is appropriate to this context.

2. See Ruck, *Sacred Names*.

3. Kerenyi, *Dionysos* 36.

leader for the chase, and the women, like hounds (731), attack the hunters, using their *thyrsos* as weapons.

Instead of the miraculous age that predated civilization, this same primordial time now is maddened to vengeance against the later agrarian age. The herdsmen themselves barely escape dismemberment, and the women fall upon their cattle instead, brutally rending them limb from limb with their hands. Then, like predatory birds, they swoop down upon the Theban farming villages beneath them, plundering and destroying them like enemies and kidnapping children, until finally they return to the miraculous springs on the mountain to cleanse their bodies of the blood.

The cultivated vine with its ferment of wine is the symbol of the world restored to balanced accord with its primitive origins, and for it to exist, its enemy must be destroyed. The primordial god must yield to Dionysus, the son of Zeus. Now that Pentheus has been ratified in his chthonic birth, both by the events within the palace and the twofold manifestation upon the mountain, the episode concludes with the presentation of Pentheus, confirmed in his coming role as victim. Once more, the dual aspects of the god are divided between him and his surrogate. Pentheus cannot, as he says, endure to 'suffer what he suffers' at the hands of women (786). Clearly, he is the sufferer, even though he had tried to make the other 'suffer' (788). In temperament, his every action demonstrates that he is the passionate one, despite the prophet's advice to calm himself (790). He is the prey for whom the net is cast (848), and the senseless confusion of his thinking is more than ever apparent. He will take pleasure in his pain (814-815). To avoid being detected in going to the mountain in stealth, he will instead go openly (816-817). And as final proof of their inverted roles, Pentheus, who had derided the prophet's effeminacy, will put on the female attire of a maenad, a stratagem that demonstrates, as Pentheus now admits, that the prophet inspired by Dionysus has been the sensible one all along (824-825). The last words of the prophet as the episode closes foretell the victim's death, which will show that the terrible god born of Zeus is most gentle to mankind.

## THE SECOND BIRTH

When we next see the two, they both have a different appearance. The god no longer disguises himself as his own prophet, but he has assumed the taurine manifestation that came into being at the chthonic birth, while the passionate Pentheus is now calm, dressed in the effeminate attire that he had despised in

the prophet and the maenadic Cadmus and Teiresias. From now until the completion of the sacrifice, the world apparently appears double, with two suns and two cities of Thebes.

On the mountain, Pentheus will experience the final consecration for his tragic role. Like the god himself, the primordial chthonic being will be entrusted to the celestial realm before being offered as the Dionysian victim, confirmed in his total dual identity by a second birth that mediates the schism between earth and sky, primitivism and cultivation.

The messenger who returns from the revel describes this second 'miracle' (1063). Apparently gesturing as he speaks to emphasize the symbolic nature of the event as a mediation, he says that the foreign prophet took the 'celestial, topmost branch of a pine tree and brought it, brought it, brought it down to the black earth. It curved like a bow, or like the circumference traced on a rounded wheel as it is inscribed by a compass. That's how the foreigner brought that mountain branch in his two hands and bent it to the ground, an act that no mortal could have done' (1064-1069). Then Pentheus sat on the pine bough, and the stranger let it go straight up. 'Straight up into the high up air it stood fast' (ὀρθὴ δ' ἐς ὀρθὸν αἰθέρ' ἐστηρίζεται 1073), an image again emphasized by gesture and repeated phrase.

When he is seen there by the maenads, the prophet disappears and a voice, 'apparently' (ὥς μὲν εἰκάσαι 1078) that of Dionysus himself, calls to them from the upper air, where, of course, Pentheus now is, announcing that the victim is at hand. At this moment, the lightning flash that had marked the first birth is repeated, and the earth and heavens are joined, transfixed by a light of holy fire (καὶ πρὸς οὐρανὸν καὶ γαῖαν ἐστήριξε φῶς σεμνοῦ πυρός, 1882-1883).

### THE PARADIGM OF ACTAEON

The death of Pentheus at the hands of the maenads involves the metaphor of the inverted hunt, in which the hunter is mistaken for the beast of prey by the pack of hounds, who revert from the domesticated state to the wild and turn upon their master. It is a story told also about Actaeon, a cousin of Pentheus, and Euripides apparently considered Actaeon's fate as paradigmatic of Pentheus's death in the *Bacchae*, for he mentions Actaeon several times (230, 337, 1227) and specifies that the dismemberment of Pentheus occurred in exactly the same place on Cithaeron where the dogs had earlier torn Actaeon to pieces (οὐπερ πρὶν Ἀκτέωνα διέλαχον κύνες, 1291). Actaeon was the son of Autonoe

(230, 681) and Aristaeus, a son of Cyrene and Apollo who was associated with advances in horticulture, namely the tending of bees and the making of cheese and the hybridizing of cultivated olives from oleasters. Aristaeus also had a more sinister aspect, for he was responsible for Eurydice's abduction to Hades, and it is apparently this regressionary trait that surfaced also in the figure of his son. In the earliest accounts, Actaeon incurred his death by rivaling Zeus as suitor of Semele (Stesichorus, fr. 68; Acusilaos, fr. 33 Jacoby), and hence as a potential mortal sire for the Dionysian child. In terms of the *Bacchae*, we may surmise that it was someone like Actaeon who had the illicit affair with Semele that Pentheus and his aunts suspect. It is appropriate, therefore, that both Pentheus and he should meet the same end, since both represent regressionary primitivism with regard to the transmutation and evolution of Dionysus into Olympian times.

Traditionally, such regression is effected by Lyssa, a goddess of madness whose name means literally 'rabies'. Lyssa is a feminine formation of the word for 'wolf' (*lykos*), and the goddess represents the rabid madness that converts the domestic dog into its wild avatar, the wolf. A fifth-century vase from Attica in the collection of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts actually depicts Lyssa as a woman with a wolf's head as she maddens Actaeon's hounds against him, while Zeus and Artemis look on.<sup>1</sup> It may be that such a costume was traditional for Lyssa. Euripides used her as a character in his *Heracles* tragedy, where her lupine symbolism is an integral part of the plot. In that play, she maddens the hero into slaughtering his own wife and children, whom he had intended to rescue from the same fate at the hands of the 'wolf' Lykos, a primordial king of Thebes. Instead, he does what the 'wolf' intended, because Lyssa leads a pack of hounds against him (860, 898) and drives him into rabidity, infected with the primitive poisons of the monstrous beasts he had himself once hunted. The most recent of these conquests in the play is the netherworld's dog Cerberus and the poison of its rabid foam (Pliny, *N. H.* 27.22), aconite, which significantly for the pattern of the tragedy was called 'wolf-bane'.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Xantriae*, Aeschylus had also brought Lyssa on the stage as a character, inspiring the Theban maenads into madness against Pentheus (fr. 169), but in the *Bacchae*, Euripides seems to have intended Pentheus himself to be in some sense a Lyssa. Thus the prophet, as he prepares to dress Pentheus in female attire, prays to Dionysus to knock Pentheus out of his senses and insert a 'giddy

1. Simon, plate p. 132.

2. Carl A. P. Ruck, *Duality and the Madness of Herakles*, *Arethusa*, 9 (1) (1976) 53-75.

Lyssa' (ἐλαφράν λύσσαν, 851), explaining that otherwise Pentheus will not accept his new costume. While he is off-stage dressing as a maenad, the choral women imagine the joy of the mountain revel, comparing themselves to a fleeing fawn that escapes the hunter's pack of hounds, and they approve of the good sense that the god displays in hunting down his impious enemy (862 ff.). Their own joy in escaping the hunter is apparently the reciprocal complement to the fate warranted by the lawless, mad prey that the god hunts. After the ensuing episode, in which Pentheus is presented in his maenadic costume, they too identify this female attire as indicative of Pentheus's Lyssa-like appearance (ἐν γυναικομίμῳ στολᾷ λυσσώδη κατάσκοπον, 980-981), and they summon Lyssa's hounds to rouse the Theban women on the mountain in oestral madness against this senseless, chthonic creature, while they imagine themselves rejoicing as they join in the hunt, led now by Justice herself and the god.

Since, as we have seen, Pentheus has the temperament of a poisonous herb and apparently, in his maenadic dress, is actually the rabid goddess of madness, his presence in the revel maddens his mother's pack of hounds (cf. 731) and they mistake him for the prey of the hunt. In view of the botanical ramifications of his identity, it is perhaps significant that the Theban women capture him as though he were a plant, uprooting the entire pine tree, which is itself a primordial version of Dionysus. There may be similar botanic implications in their use of the *thyrsos* as a weapon (733, 1099).

The lupine and serpentine connotations of Pentheus's identity mark him both as the enemy intruding upon the Golden Age and as the primitivism that cultivation must overcome, for the end of the Golden Age was issued in when serpents acquired their deadly poisons and the wolves began to plunder (Vergil, *Georgics* 1.129-130).

## THE REGRESSION OF CADMEAN THEBES

The *Bacchae* concludes with a curious prophecy delivered by Dionysus. Cadmus and his wife Harmonia will be transformed into serpents and ride away in a carriage or chariot drawn by calves. Cadmus will become the leader of a barbarian host, presumably the Encheleis or 'Eel-people' of northern Epirus, amongst whom in historical times the earlier sovereignty of Cadmus was commemorated by the carrying of serpent ornaments as standards, in the same manner as the similar ornaments of the supposedly autochthonous Erechtheid lineage at Athens. With these people, Cadmus will eventually attack many

cities, until finally he will be defeated in an assault upon Apollo's oracular sanctuary at Delphi. There at last, his barbaric horde will be routed and he and Harmonia alone will be rescued and transported to the Islands of the Blest by Ares, the god of war, who was Harmonia's father (1330 ff., 1352 ff.). In actual fact, such an oracle was current at the time of the Persian Wars, when Mar-donius used it to justify his attack on Delphi, although it was well known that its true reference was to the Illyrians and the Encheleis (Herodotus 9.42 ff.).

In its context in the *Bacchae*, the prophecy is final proof of Dionysus's now vindicated Olympian lineage, for, as he says, he knows these things from no mortal father, but from Zeus (1340-1344, 1349). The corollary of that ascendancy is the destruction of his darker self in the victory he has just enacted over Pentheus. The fall of Pentheus and his pre-viticultural kingdom entails the demise of the entire civilization that Cadmus once had founded at Thebes, and the city, according to the prophecy, must now revert to its primitive state.

The fall of the house of Cadmus had been dramatized in the earthquake that shook the palace, and it was announced explicitly at the beginning of the messenger's account of the death of Pentheus. Cadmus, as the messenger says, was the one 'who sowed the earth-born harvest of the serpent snake in the land' (1025-1026). The failure of that primordial cultivation is lamented by Cadmus himself at the end of the play. He will be cast out of his house, 'he, Cadmus the Great, who sowed and reaped that superb harvest, the race of Thebans' (1314-1315). He and Teiresias had set out for the mountain revel at the beginning of the drama as two old men in hope of rejuvenation (187-188, 190), but now he returns from there unfulfilled, reproached by Agave for what she perceives as the ill temper of old age (1251 ff.), and bearing the mangled pieces of the young man (1218 ff.) who had inherited the culture he had once founded and who should have been his protection from the indignities of time (1303 ff.).

The founding of Thebes involved the mediation of indigenous and immigrant peoples, together with their dichotomous religious systems. Thus Cadmus, like another Apollo, whose directions he was following, destroyed the primordial serpent at Thebes and then planted its fangs, the so-called dragon's teeth, in the ground, from which grew the first crop of autochthonous creatures. To one, he gave his daughter Agave, thus mingling the blood lines and establishing the Indo-European traditions of patrilineality and patrilocality. Still another daughter brought an Olympian connection and the potential for dominance over the transmuted toxins of the earth. The success of Cadmus's foundation, as we have seen, was symbolized by his own patrilocal marriage to an Olympian female, Harmonia, whose name indicates the harmony between the realms, that



was symbolized also by the attendance of the Olympians themselves at her marriage feast at Thebes. Since Harmonia was a half-sister to the primordial serpent (Sophocles, *Antigone* 126 *cum schol.*), she functions as an Olympian replacement for the autochthonous female originally associated with the serpent's spring.

A similar mediation can be seen in Apollo's victory over the serpent at Delphi. By destroying the serpent, Apollo established Olympian dominance over the sanctuary, that earlier had belonged to chthonic forces. It is ironic that Cadmus and Harmonia, as indication of their regression from Olympian harmony, will become 'dragon and dragonness' (1358) at the head of a host of serpentine 'Eel-people' and will finally themselves be routed in their attack upon this same Delphic sanctuary.

Their cow-drawn cart is similarly indicative of the reversion to the pre-foundational condition, for Cadmus had been advised at the Delphic shrine to follow a cow into Boeotia, the land that would be named after it, and to found a city on the site where it lay down. He was descended from a line that twice had experienced a union with Zeus that involved taurine symbolism and migratory wanderings, first with Io, and again four generations later with Europa, the sister whom Cadmus was seeking when Apollo directed him into Boeotia. In the *Bacchae*, a taurine Dionysus has disrupted the city by sending its women rutting on the mountain, and again wandering cows will lead the Cadmean dynasty away from settled life.

At Thebes, the royal lineage will pass to the house of Oedipus, whose founder Labdacus was supposedly related to Cadmus via the latter's only son, Polydorus, a shadowy figure whose name as the 'one of many gifts' suggests chthonic associations with Hades and Plutus or 'wealth'. Labdacus is clearly a repetition of Cadmus, for Cadmus, as civilizer, was supposed to have introduced the Phoenician alphabet to Thebes, an event that also involves Labdacus, since another name for Cadmus's son was Pinakos, the 'writing tablet', and Labdacus seems to be named for *lambda*, the letter that follows the initial letter of Cadmus's name.<sup>1</sup> While Labdacus's son Laius is in his minority, the kingship will be exercised by the sinister ancestor and namesake of Heracles' opponent, the wolfish Lykos, like Pentheus, a son of one of the original Spartoi, Chthonius, a 'man of the earth'. His wife will be the maenadic Dirce, a woman associated with the Theban spring. Only after his death is Thebes again founded, this time by the

1. Kerényi, *The Heroes of the Greeks* (Thames and Hudson, London 1959, translated from the German) 88. Since I follow Kerényi's interpre-

tation of the traditions about Cadmus, I have not cited original sources, which are documented in *Heroes of the Greeks*.

dissimilar brothers who were his nephews, Amphion and Zethus, the latter of whom married the Theban spring that gave the city its new name of Thebes.

Under Laius, the city will again suffer from the failure to mediate with the chthonic realm. He himself is supposed to have incurred a curse upon his house by the abduction of Chrysippus, an homoerotic affair that demonstrates his disregard for the fertile power of the earth, which in outrage will eventually manifest itself in the predations of the maenadic Sphinx, again on Cithaeron. His son Oedipus, at whose hands he will die, will have been inadvertently begotten in drunkenness upon a descendant of the serpentine Echion, and although he will at first rescue the city from the mountain madness, the sinister implications of his conception, against the advice of Apollo, and of his exposure to the mountain wilderness in his infancy, as well as his nurture by the wife of the cattle-tending Polybus, will eventually surface, uncovering his darker, pre-Olympian identity as the consort in the queen's matrilineal and matrilocal kingdom.<sup>1</sup> The city will return to fertility only when the pollution of this darker identity is recognized, in compensation for the previous, mistaken disregard of the Labdacids for chthonic primitivism. While the sons of Oedipus quarrel for control of the city in the great battle at the seven gates, a battle that pitched descendants of the autochthonous Spartoi against a host of foreign immigrants, the city will again be saved by an attempted mediation with the spirit of the slain primordial serpent, by offering a sacrifice of the last unwed descendant of the crop that Cadmus planted, so that the earth might take back a harvest for its harvest and mortal blood for its blood (Euripides, *Phoenician Women* 931 ff.). Even that pacification, however, will prove unstable, for the new regent, again the brother of the great queen, will demonstrate his lack of accord with the chthonic realm upon which his city rests, by burying the living and unburying the dead. And even in the next generation, the sons of the seven who came against Thebes will repeat their fathers' war.

This summary of the familiar mythical traditions about Thebes cannot, of course, do justice to the complexity of the subject, but is intended as an outline of what could be documented by a fuller analysis of the way Thebes figures in

1. Kerenyi, *Heroes* 88 ff. The Oedipean duality is indicated, as is common in the traditions about heroes, by the riddle of his own name. The pre-Olympian aspect of his identity has him gathered in the wilderness like a Dionysian child, a creature like a plant

with a single foot. In Sophocles' *Oedipus*, he discovers his Dionysian primitivism vis-à-vis Apollo, whose Olympian nature is confirmed when Oedipus, like another Pentheus, becomes the polluted scapegoat.

tragic literature. As the city where Dionysus was born and initially rejected, Thebes was an important theme for Athenian tragedians. The story of Pentheus deserves to be viewed within the context of the entire body of Theban traditions, which seem to present the city as repeatedly unstable in its foundation because of a basic failure to maintain accord with the fertile sources of primitivism.

In the metamorphosis of Cadmus into a serpent, we can probably sense the regression of the supposed foreigner, the great civilizer and founder of an Olympian realm, to his own more primitive identity as an autochthonous chthonic figure, the form in which he was known in the mysteries of the Kabeiroi at Thebes and elsewhere. Thus Cadmus was said to be a son of a native, primal man, Ogygos, the child of Earth (Pausanias 9.5.1), in which case, the foreign realm from which he came was distant from Thebes only in the vertical plane, and the serpent whom he killed was his own primitive nature. In a similar way, the foreigner Medea was also aboriginal at Corinth. In the mysteries, Cadmus was apparently the father of a divine child, called Cadmilus or 'little Cadmus', another Hermes and, like him, represented by an ithyphallic herm. The foreign 'Eel-people' over whom Cadmus will rule suggest his own more primitive kingship over the eels of the lake in his native Boeotia, and the complex traditions about his journeys toward Thebes involve the story of his own taurine abduction of a bovine Harmonia, who was actually his sister, a Persephone-like figure who was mourned by the mother, in whose company Cadmus and his brothers were said to have wandered, searching for her at the ends of the earth.<sup>1</sup>

### FROM POLLUTION TO FERTILITY

The *Bacchae*, as the work of an Athenian poet, presents a typically Athenian bias toward Thebes and Dionysian symbolism. Athens is a stable and eternal city, in the divine keeping of Athena, a primordial mother goddess, reborn as a virgin daughter of Zeus and successfully transmuted into the primarily masculine orientation of Olympian times.<sup>2</sup> Thus, for example, she wears male attire and was said to have helped the various sons of Zeus in conquering primitivism, including manifestations of her own primordial identity. Unlike Thebes, the traditions about Athens' autochthonous dynasties demonstrate that the city has successfully mediated the dichotomy of primitivism and culture.<sup>3</sup> In actual fact,

1. Kerenyi, *Heroes* 25-33.

2. Lyster.

3. John Peradotto, *Oedipus and Erichthonius*: 85-101.

Some Observations on Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Order, *Arethusa*, 10 (1) (Spring 1977)

the incorporation of rural Dionysian celebrations into the city's calendar of religious observances under the populist tyrant Peisistratus is living proof, enacted again each year, of Athens' acceptance of Dionysus. By the time of Euripides, the festivals of drama had become an important indication of the city's cultured life and a demonstration that the elsewhere dangerous god was a son of Zeus at Athens and a founder of civilization.

Typically, the regressive tendencies of Thebes cannot be solved there, but, in the Athenian view, can only be pacified through the intermediary of Athens, which, with its more stable foundation, will be able to provide the appropriate mediation to incorporate the rejected Theban primitivism into its own grand alliance of beneficent atavistic powers that sustain the civilized city. Thus, at the end of the *Heracles*, the former Olympian hero, polluted with the wolf-man's madness, is offered a tomb in Athens, to replace the altar to his father Zeus that at the beginning of the play had supposedly indicated his Olympian identity and his successful rout of the primitive forces threatening Thebes. In offering the tomb, Theseus, one of the mythical founders of Athens, is enacting the brighter version of his name as the 'placer', as opposed to his more sinister aspect as the one whose identity was indicated by the tokens 'placed' beneath the stone at Troezen, the city where he too was conceived, against the advice of Apollo, in irrational drunkenness. Ironically, Theseus in the *Heracles* had just been freed himself from the stone that had merged with his backside in Persephone's realm, and thus his entombment of the fallen Heracles is the counterpoise to his own ascendancy, and the stone tomb in Athens supplants the stone of the now meaningless altar in Thebes.

As in the case of Heracles, there were also traditions about the reversion of Theseus to a darker persona. Thus it was sometimes claimed that he never returned from Persephone's realm, or that he died away from his native land in a controversy with a wolf-man named Lykomedes, while the kingship at Athens was regained for a time by the autochthonous dynasty. In a curious historical enactment of the basic mythical idea, here too the value of primitivism was recognized and reincorporated into Athenian traditions. What were supposed to be the bones of Theseus were recovered and returned to Athens for burial in 473 B.C., after his spirit had appeared to many in the recent battle against the Persians at Marathon (Plutarch, *Theseus* 35-36).

The burial of pollution at Athens is, in fact, the common theme of Theseus as the mythical Athenian king. In Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, another contaminated hero from Thebes is buried by Theseus at Athens. He enters into a covenant with Oedipus, whose rotting old body will be placed in Athenian land

in the grove of the Eumenides, an alliance with the netherworld that will be an additional source of fertility and eternal stability amidst the vicissitudes of time, while the controversies at Thebes continue to rage in the warring of Oedipus's sons. Theseus also champions the cause of burying what Thebes refuses to place into its own ground in Euripides' *Suppliants*, where he espouses the supplication of the mothers of the Seven who fell in the war at the gates of Thebes, and retrieves their bodies for interment at Eleusis, thus again striking an alliance that will fortify his own city. His son Demophon, in Euripides' *Sons of Heracles*, will similarly strengthen Athens by providing burial even for Eurystheus, the archenemy and sinister double of Heracles who was defeated in a battle at Marathon. The theme can be noted even in Euripides' *Hippolytus*, where Theseus is reconciled with his own chthonic aspect in the person of his damned bastard son whom he mistakenly suspected of a Persephone-like abduction. Hippolytus too will be buried at Athens and incorporated into the city's religious foundations.

These burials at Athens demonstrate the same reconciliation with primitivism that we have already noted with regard to the conversion of the Erinyes into the beneficent Eumenides. These daughters of Night and sisters of Lyssa, who track down the prey they madden with wild delusions and contaminate with their excremental nature, could pollute the land with a 'lichenous' (λίχην, 785) plague of fungal-like parasitic sterility, until Athena in Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, caring for her city like a gardener (911), cajoles them into friendship by burying them in the earth, where their rotting poisons can function, not atavistically, but as a source of fertile growth for the Olympian institutions of the cultivated city.

The agrarian significance of such an incorporation of pestilential putrefaction as a benefit to the city was actually ritualized in Athens at the Skira and Thesmophoria festivals. Sacrificial pigs, animals akin to the netherworld deities, probably because of the characteristically obnoxious smell of their excrement, were tossed into subterranean caverns and allowed to rot, and, four months later, their putrefied remains were exhumed and spread upon the fields as fertilizer.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the theme of actual burial at Athens, we can trace the similar theme of the reintegration of pollution into society in a number of other tragedies. In Sophocles' *Philoctetes*, the diseased and fit-prone hero is induced to abandon his exile and bring the contamination of his poisoned body and envenomed arrows to Troy, where his presence will allow his fellow Greeks at last to take the

1. H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (Cornell, Ithaca 1977) 159-160.

citadel. Reintegration seems also to have been essential to the theme of Sophocles' *Ajax*. Here too, the hero, who has regressed to a pre-Olympian identity, is finally reconciled with his enemies. Denied the inheritance of Achilles' armour, Ajax becomes a maddened cattle thief, and although he was supposedly named for the *aetos* or 'eagle' of Zeus, his darker persona will surface, the primordial Ajax, named for *Aia* or 'Earth' and the lamentation (*aiai*) of his tragic fate. Once he is dead, however, Odysseus, the new bearer of Achilles' armour and the particular enemy of Ajax, will side with the hero's surviving brother and convince the Atreidae to allow him burial.

In the context, therefore, of similar tragedies on the theme of primitivism and culture, the *Bacchae* is somewhat unique in not expressly enacting the reconciliation and reintegration. Although the chorus of Asiatic devotees joyously welcomes the deluded Agave as a fellow member of their revel band (1172), she will vow never to be a bacchant again as she goes into exile from her native Thebes (1384 ff.). A lacuna in the text of the *Bacchae* before the final prophecy of Dionysus obliterates a section of the play, that can, however be reconstructed from other sources.<sup>1</sup> The body of Pentheus was apparently reassembled onstage and prepared with lamentation for burial, but the truer reconciliation is probably the condemnation of the regressive Thebes and the vindication of the viticultural aspect of the god, who, as is implicit in the performance of the play at a Dionysian festival, has been integrated into the religion of another, more cultivated city.

## TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF TRAGEDY

Sometime in the early history of the drama festivals at Athens, it apparently became a stock criticism of a particular play that it had 'nothing to do with Dionysus'.<sup>2</sup> The phrase would seem to imply that a good tragedy was expected to concern itself with Dionysian themes, although the *Bacchae* is the only extant tragedy actually about Dionysus, and only a few of the lost plays appear to have been written on the actual subject of Semele, the bacchants, or the god's traditional enemies. The satyr plays and the comedies that were also part of the festivals could more easily maintain a Dionysian relevance, if for no other reason than their obvious phallic exuberance, but actually, given the great number of tragedies included at each performance, it is difficult to see how constant,

1. See Dodds, *Bacchae* 234-235. 2. Pickard-Cambridge 124-126.

simple repetition of the Dionysus myth would not have become unbearably tedious. The demand for Dionysian relevance in the tragedies must be understood as indicating something less literal than continuous reiteration of the god's myth. We have already seen that Dionysian themes can underlie the telling of apparently quite unrelated myths, and this argument could be expanded to encompass all the extant tragedies, if we were to consider themes other than the one germane to our discussion of the *Bacchae*. As conclusion, however, I should like to place the experience of ancient drama in its Dionysian context in order to demonstrate its relevance to the god as a religious celebration, since this too is an enactment of the transmutation of primitivism to culture.

Drama itself was a kind of madness. Actors are frequently portrayed in vase paintings and terra-cotta figurines contemplating the mask of the character they will impersonate on the stage. It is a commonly observed phenomenon that actors become quite literally obsessed by the personae of their roles, and ancient actors, in particular, by wearing the masks of the mythical figures they impersonated, can be expected to have experienced a kind of possession by the spirit of these dead heroes who returned, in the dramas, from the past. One of the early occasions for drama was, in fact, the performance of a hero's story at his tomb,<sup>1</sup> and in Athens, the earliest masking techniques of Thespis, the first tragic poet, suggest that the performers were intended to represent spirits of primordial times. Thespis disguised their faces with gypsum (Plutarch, *de Proverbiis Alexandrinorum* 30) or white lead (Suidas, s. v. Thespis), apparently to imitate the bloodless color of ghosts.<sup>2</sup> A similar disguise was associated with the primordial Titans who were said to have slaughtered and cooked the infant Dionysus (*Orphica Fragmenta* 209 Kern) in a regressive manner, contrary to the evolution of the culinary arts. Thespis apparently also used wine lees (*Anthologia Graeca*, Dioscorides, 7.411; Horace, *Ars Poetica* 275-277), the unfermented residue from the god's harvest as the grape. Perhaps even more significant was his use of wreaths of strawberry-tree (Suidas, *loc. cit.*), supposedly a primitive food of the Golden Age (Vergil, *Georgics* 147-149) and a fruit that today is used, as in the ancient manner, to fortify wine in some regions of Greece.<sup>3</sup> The aged Athenian lawgiver Solon was said to have disapproved of Thespis's performances of tragedy as a lie (Plutarch, *Solon* 29; Diogenes Laertius 1.59), perhaps because these early dramatic impersonations, unlike simply choral poetry, seemed to evoke the dead from the underworld.<sup>4</sup>

The enthusiasm of the actors who brought such figures to life in the service

1. Pickard-Cambridge 101-107. 2. Kerenyi, *Dionysos* 327. 3. *Ibid.* 4. *Ibid.*

of the god was, moreover, a contagious experience for the spectators as well. The people of the ancient audience, if they could read at all, were more accustomed to witnessing the performance of literature than to deciphering the written word in private.<sup>1</sup> In order to recapture the enthusiasm of the original audience, we must consider what manner of mentality would have been involved in witnessing drama, as opposed to reading it. The reader tends to stand apart from the communication and judge it rationally. This is less true when what is read is already familiar or to some extent even memorized, as was the more common case in classical times, for then the words serve merely to remind the memory of things already known and stored away as part of the cultural heritage of given truths. In performance, however, the words tend to capture the mind and imagination with a greater vividness. The judgmental processes recede to the dominance of emotional responses, especially when the performance, like classical drama, is musical and rhythmic, with imposing spectacle and dance. To an audience not accustomed to the detachment of reading and not yet desensitized, as in modern times, by too frequent an exposure to dramatic enactments, such emotionality would be even more pronounced. The whole audience might fall to weeping or be possessed by the contagion of laughter, enraptured by the impersonated spirits.

Wine itself seemed to have played a role in intensifying such a dominance of emotion over rationality in the ancient theater. We must imagine an audience in somewhat less than a perfectly rational state pharmacologically, for, as Philochorus, the fourth-century historian of Attica and its religious practices, records (fr. 171 Jacoby), the spectators prepared themselves by drinking throughout the days of dramatic performance, in addition to whatever drinking, presumably of a deeper nature, took place during the evenings of revelry. The wine drunk was called *trimma* (τρίμιμα), like the one drunk at marriages, apparently so named from the fortifying additives that were 'ground' into it (Hesychius, s. v. *trimma*).<sup>2</sup> There were traditions also that claimed that the poets themselves were possessed by the spirit of the wine when they performed their dramas (Athenaeus 1.22, 10.429).

Such drinking in the theater should not be taken to imply a boisterous or ill-attentive audience, but one irrationally enraptured by the music and the dance and the age-old stories of what was supposed to be history, now again

1. Eric Havelock, *A Preface to Plato* (Harvard, Cambridge, MA, 1963).

Jones omits the mention of the drinking of *trimma* in the theater.

2. The citation of Hesychius in Liddell, Scott/



come alive. Actually, we have an eloquent eye-witness description of the mesmerizing effect of dramatic poetry on both the actors and the audience in Plato's *Ion* dialogue. Plato had himself been a tragic poet before he turned to philosophy, and although he may exaggerate a little to make his argument against the irrationality of the poetic experience, his description must be accepted as authentic evidence about the general nature, at least, of what happened in the theater of the classical age.

The description purports to be Socrates' rebuttal to the claims of a renowned poetic expert, the rhapsodist Ion, who had made the conventional assertion that poetry is knowledge. It appears, however, that poets do not really understand their own poetry in any rational sense (533d ff.). All poets compose not by art or scientific skill, but because they become possessed and filled with divinity. Music and rhythm lead them into a condition where they are no longer in control of their own wits, but are actually possessed by the subject or figure they are impersonating. They are, in fact, like people entranced or bewitched. The god has removed their minds and substituted his own, using them as his servants, the vehicles for a communication that simply seems to pass through them, although it is not their own. They are like prophets and oracles, who speak for the god, but do not comprehend or at times even remember what words they spoke when the possessing spirit came upon them.

This enchantment, moreover, is a contagion that spreads to the audience as well. The god, according to Plato, is like a magnet drawing the poet or performer into bondage with its attractive force, and through his inspired servants, the binding attraction passes on to the spectators, uniting them all like so many iron rings drawn ineluctably into a continuous chain.

Both poet and audience, in fact, are drunk, but on a potion superior even to that of wine, for the god, in this celebration of his evolution to culture, transports and reunites his people with primordial times of the Golden Age. The drama itself is a drink that the poets have fetched from the magical springs that flow in the gardens of the Muses, a potion composed of the commingled nectars of flowers that are tended not by human agents, but simply found in a metaphysical wilderness by the ecstatic poets, as they go, like bees, from each to each. It is this special drink that the poets offer, and through it, the whole world seems metamorphosed, with rivers, as on Cithaeron, that flow with milk and honey. In the throes of this intoxication, the whole theater will fall to weeping along with the actor although they are celebrating a joyous festival, or their hair will stand on end for fear although they sit amidst their closest friends.

In a deeper sense, it is not the reanimated dead who have so captivated and

enthralled the actors and their audience, but rather the culture's heritage of myth, the ancient patterns of story and metaphor that have accompanied the people in the long course of their history from primordial times. The meanings of these stories are elusive, for they have been told over centuries and have had a multiplicity of referents and they seem always to suggest subtleties receding beyond the frontiers of conscious knowledge. The ancient poets were trained in the skill of telling these stories, molding them in accordance with criteria of balance and harmony, but, as Socrates testifies in the *Apology* (22b ff.), not themselves really capable of explaining what they intended as meaning. Traditionally, these inspired transmitters of myth ascribed the source outside their own conscious control to the Muses, who were the daughters of Memory, the repository of the cultural heritage. In performance, these poets and their actors led the audience back into the world of myth, imparting to it their own sense of its deep, although elusive, worth and relevance for the present.

This confrontation with myth not only brought the people back to its historical past, but, as ontogenesis as well, it reunited the individual with the primordial and darker versions of the self that underlay the persona of civilized life, the infant in the adult and the wild in the cultured. What Aristotle was to call the tragic flaw had not only such a reference to the personal psyche, however, but to the whole of society as well, which was reconfirmed in its civilized state by experiencing this journey back to primitive origins.

Such a journey is basically Dionysian and does not require the story specifically of Dionysus to be told. From the viewpoint of the tragic poets, there were particular ways of telling a story that pertained to their god and his area of symbolism, different, for example, from the ways of the epinician poets. The latter celebrated the masculine virtues of Olympian heroes and of the victorious athletes who surpassed for a time the limits of their own mortality, reasserting their families' aristocratic claim to divine lineage. But the tragic poets told instead of the hero's fall from Olympian grace into the dominance of women and the foredestined tomb. When freed from the personalism of the Aristotlean bias, the mythopoeia of the tragic poets can be shown to represent a consistent pattern or design, in which the hero's fall repeatedly involves Dionysian symbolism, the regression to a more primordial identity, and the restitution of fertility to the civilized world, or some favored part of it, by the incorporation of the polluted, non-Olympian persona. In this manner, the inspired enthrallment of the theater experience was itself an analogue to the stories enacted in the dramas that celebrated the god who himself submitted to death in order to be reborn with his gift of wine.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

# THE OFFERINGS FROM THE HYPERBOREANS

## INTRODUCTION

The Hyperboreans were a mythical people, living beyond the frontier of the world known to the classical Greeks, in what was reputed to be the original homeland of the god Apollo. Each year, however, these supposedly imaginary people joined the real cities of Greece in sending actual offerings to the god at his sanctuary on the sacred island of Delos. The other cities all sent envoys with sheaves of grain, the so-called first fruits of the year's crop, harvested before they had completely ripened, but the sheaf of wheat from the Hyperboreans was special for it was supposed to conceal some other plant, a secret offering bound within it.<sup>1</sup> Whoever actually sent this special gift from the lands of myth, the plant itself, we may assume, would have to have been something that was considered particularly appropriate to the supposed Hyperboreans,<sup>2</sup> as well as

1. Herodotus (4.33) mentioned 'sacred things bound in wheat-straw' and Pausanias (1.31.2) called them 'first fruits hidden in wheat-straw,' adding that their identity 'was known by no one.' Callimachus, however, in his *Hymn to Delos* (4.275 ff.), seems to identify these Hyperborean offerings as nothing more than 'a stalk and sacred sheaves of grain' (thus, M. Cary, *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford 1970, s. v. Hyperboreans), but a closer examination of the context reconciles his account with the other two. Callimachus is describing the general convergence of first fruits upon Delos, sent from all the cities of the Greek world, amongst which the land of the Hyperboreans is mentioned as the most distant. He then goes on to give the aetiological myth that explained the special manner in which the Hyperborean offerings were conveyed to Delos, not in person by the Hyperborean emissaries, as in the case of the other cities, but indirectly through a series of intermediaries. In this context, there was no reason to distinguish the special contents of the Hyperborean offerings from the general tribute of first fruits. Callimachus's point is simply to illustrate the glory of Delos in receiving tribute from even the most distant of the Greek lands.

If the 'sacred things' or 'first fruits' were still a secret in the second century A.D., when Pausanias gathered his information, it is unlikely that Callimachus, three centuries earlier, would have known that the whole tradition was merely a pious hoax, nor would such a revelation suit the context of a hymn, in the Homeric manner, in praise of Delos. As an antiquarian poet, it is just such traditions that he would have wanted to perpetuate.

Nor is it clear that the Hyperborean offering was actually a sheaf of grain, for 'wheat-straw,' 'stubble,' or 'stalk' (*kalame*) is not the same thing as 'sheaf' (*dragma*, literally, a 'handful' or 'as many stalks or *kalamai* as the reaper can grasp in his left hand'). Since the Hyperborean offering, as we shall see, had a longer distance to travel, it is unlikely that it could have been cut at the same time as the other offerings of first fruits. That it was a 'first fruit' is documented by Pausanias, but the 'straw' may have been intended merely to hide it or preserve it over the journey.

2. Tithes and first fruits were often of a kind particularly identified with the traditions of the donor and could even on occasion be represented by a model, as, for example, a head of

to the pre-Hellenic identity of their original god and to the meaning of such ritual presentations of first fruits.

### THE ROUTE FOR THE OFFERINGS

The Hyperborean offering was transmitted from its origin indirectly along its way to Delos through a succession of intervening peoples. Somewhere along this route, the actual sheaf with its secret contents must have materialized out of the land of myth.

The route for the transmission is recorded in three ancient authors,<sup>1</sup> who are in essential agreement that the offerings traveled a strangely indirect, zig-zag course, up the Danube, then south along the shore of the Adriatic, and eastward through Dodona and across the Thessalian plain, before finally going south through Euboea and the adjacent islands to Delos. This was obviously not the easiest nor most direct route from Scythia, through which the offerings had initially passed on their way from the Hyperboreans. They could more simply have been sent through the Hellespont and along the northern shore of the Aegean. The careful preservation of this Danube and Adriatic route must have had symbolic significance, and it may retrace the historical route of a tribal migration of Indo-Europeans into the Greek lands from central Asia.

At the other end of the journey, beyond the Scythians, we hear of only one further people before we enter the lands of myth. These are the Issedonians (Pausanias 1.31.2), a nomadic Indo-European tribe living along the forested south-western slopes of the Altai Mountains, which form the western fringe of the central Asiatic massif.<sup>2</sup>

Beyond them were the Hyperboreans, who either transmitted the offerings through the intermediary of the Arimaspeans (Pausanias, loc. cit.) or perhaps

celery from Selinus or a head of the precious drug plant silphium from the people of its native Libya. In the same manner, we hear of a golden radish, a silver beet, and a turnip of lead, apparently from private donors, as well as a silver duck from a poulterer, and so on. See William H. D. Rouse, *Greek Votive Offerings* (University Press, Cambridge, U. K. 1902, reprinted by Arno Press, New York 1975) 60-94. We can expect that the secret offering was considered to be the special Hyperborean plant.

1. For the ancient testimony, see p 225 note 1.

The three documents cover the same route, but mention different places along the way. The one divergence is the insertion of an Athenian role in the final delivery of the offerings, according to Pausanias's account. This apparently reflects Athenian dominance over the sacred island, dating from sometime after the writing of Herodotus, and the innovation may have coincided with the Athenian reorganization of the Delian festival around the year 418 B.C., when Athens dedicated the new temple to Apollo.

2. J. D. P. Bolton *Aristeas of Proconnesus* (Oxford 1962) 104-118.

were themselves identical with these Arimaspeans (Callimachus, *Hymn* 4.291 *cum scholia*; Antimachus, frg. 118). The name of these Arimaspeans is supposed to be descriptive of them in the Scythian language. They were a people who had only a single eye (Herodotus 4.27). They lived near the Gorgons (Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 790 ff.; Pindar, *Pythia* 10.45)<sup>1</sup> amongst monstrous griffins, whose gold they were said to steal.

## HYPERBOREANS

These Hyperboreans, as the Greeks understood their name (Herodotus 4.36; Pindar, *Olympia* 3.31; Callimachus, *Hymn* 4.281; etc.),<sup>2</sup> lived in a paradise 'beyond the North Wind,' who was personified as Boreas. Although north of the Greek lands, the Hyperboreans appear to have been imagined as living also considerably toward the east, for Boreas, in early Greek cartography, did not stand for the cardinal point until later advances in astronomy, and Boreas could shift around from place to place to indicate the direction from which the north wind would appear to blow at different locations. In the region of the Hyperboreans, beyond the Issedonians on the slopes of the Altai Mountains, the bitter prevailing winds sweep westward down through the Dzungian Gate. On the other side of the mountain pass, the Hyperboreans lived. Boreas himself was supposed to have had his home in a cave, which can perhaps be still identified with an actual Cave of the Winds that is located there within the mountain pass in Asiatic lore.<sup>3</sup>

The journey to the mythical land of the Hyperboreans was to be accom-

1. The placement of the Gorgons in the east (instead of the more customary west) seems to have derived from the *Arimaspea* of Aristeas. See Bolton 61 ff. It is probable, however, that the Gorgons were traditionally placed near each of the Greek versions of paradise or the otherworld. Thus they are found also to the south amongst the Ethiopians, as well as with the Hesperides in the west. See Joseph Fontenrose, *Python: A Study of Delphic Myth and its Origins* (University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1959) 288.

2. The ancient etymology has been questioned in the modern era. Ahrens suggested that the name was actually derived from a supposed variant, Hyperphoroi, and thus the Hyperboreans were simply the same as the 'Perpherees,'

the name that Herodotus records for the emissaries or 'conveyers' who delivered the offerings to Delos. Schroeder, on the other hand, assumed that 'Boris' was a variant of the word for 'mountain' (*oros*) and interpreted the Hyperboreans as the people who lived 'beyond the mountain.' See Lewis Richard Farnell, *The Cults of the Greek States* (Oxford 1896-1909) 4.102 ff. Further references are found in Pierre Chantraine, *Dictionnaire Etymologique de la Langue Grecque* (Klincksieck, Paris 1968) 1157-1158. Farnell enthusiastically endorsed Ahren's interpretation, but there is probably nothing wrong with the etymology current in antiquity. It is accepted as correct by E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951) 162, and Bolton 195.

3. Bolton 94 ff.

plished only through inspiration and mystical transport, as would be expected, for there is no other way to find the long pathway to another world. There was a poem, entitled the *Arimaspea*, about such a journey to the Hyperboreans. It was ascribed to a certain Aristeas of Proconnesus, an island in the sea of Marmara. Since Aristeas is supposed to have reappeared in Italy amongst the Metapontines in the fifth century, some two and a half centuries after his death (Herodotus 4.15), he is probably not so much a real person as the traditional persona that was assumed by a poet in reciting that type of poem. Such poems, like the songs of Hesiod, were originally oral in composition and were perpetuated by a religious society of similarly inspired poets, who could all speak in the biographical persona of their supposed founder.<sup>1</sup> Just as Hesiod appears to have been a Boeotian farmer with an evil and greedy brother, the Aristeian persona is characterised by his experiences of shamanic rapture. He was said to have journeyed to the Hyperboreans while 'possessed by Apollo' (*Phoibolamptos*, Herodotus 4.13),<sup>2</sup> an experience that was thought to have happened to him first in a fuller's shop in Proconnesus, but which was repeated, according to some sources (Apollonius, *Mirabilia* 2), over a long period of time. During these seizures, he had the appearance of being dead, while his soul would leave his body (Suidas, s. v. Aristeas; Maximus of Tyre 10.2 ff.) in the form of a raven (Pliny, *Natural History* 7.174), a bird sacred to Apollo and associated, in particular, with the god as his spiritually possessed 'bride' or mate and devotee.<sup>3</sup> As this animal familiar of the god, Aristeas would travel far and wide. He was also

1. Gregory Nagy, *Hesiod* (T. J. Luce 1982).

2. K. Meuli (1935) *Scythica*, *Hermes* 70, 121-176. Bolton, 125 ff., disputes what has become the common acceptance of Aristeas as a shaman. He argues that Aristeas was simply someone who was somewhat of a religious fanatic about Apollo and that because of his love for the god, he set out on an actual trip to what he believed to be the topographical homeland of the god, going only so far as the Issedones and hearing from them of a civilized race beyond the central Asiatic massif, who in reality were probably the Chinese. Although Herodotus does claim that Aristeas did not go so far as the Hyperboreans – a strange shortfall for a shaman's journey, as Bolton points out – we should note that not all the sources, who presumably also had access to the *Arimaspea*, agree that he failed to reach the goal of his travels.

Bolton further argues that the reappearance of Aristeas amongst the Metapontines was a resuscitation of his memory by the Pythagoreans as a justification for their own vegetarianism, a trait that they shared, as we shall see, with the Hyperboreans.

The diverse traditions about Aristeas, however, are probably not to be reconciled with reality, but indicate, as I have suggested, the persona of an oral tradition of poetry about the journey to the Hyperboreans, nor should we assume that the so-called *Arimaspea* was a fixed text without variants.

For a refutation of Bolton's view, see Ken Dowden (1980) *Deux notes sur les Scythes et les Arimaspes*, *Revue des Etudes Grecques* 93, 486-492.

3. C. Kerenyi, *Asklepios: Archetypal Image of the Physician's Existence* (Pantheon, New York 1957, translated from the German of 1947) 87-100.

thought to have the gift of prognostication and was closely identified with Apollo in certain of his cults.

It was not only Aristeas, however, who experienced such Hyperborean rapture. The shamanic nature of the journey was a traditional theme. Abaris, who, like Aristeas, was the assumed author of another collection of verses, was himself supposed to have been a Hyperborean and was said to have traveled about the earth on an arrow from Apollo's temple amongst those imaginary people (Herodotus 4.36; Suidas, s. v. Abaris).<sup>1</sup> Pindar thought that Abaris was a contemporary of Croesus (frg. 283 Bowra), although, like Aristeas, he too seems to have reappeared at a later date, both in Athens (Suidas, s. v. Abaris) and amongst the Spartans, whom he directed in the performance of sacrifices to avert plagues (Apollonius, *Mirabilia* 4), a ritual that, as we shall see, had definite Hyperborean connotations.

Another of these Hyperborean travellers was Olen, the reputed composer of certain very ancient hymns that were sung at Delos on the subject of the first Hyperborean offerings and a similar purificatory ritual (Herodotus 4.35; Callimachus, *Hymn* 4.304-305). He was claimed as the founder and first prophet of the oracle of Apollo at Delphi (Pausanias 10.5.7), and hence, he too, like Aristeas and Abaris, was presumably the traditional persona of a shamanic poet possessed by the god. He was either a Lycian who came from the Hyperboreans (Pausanias 5.7.8) or was actually himself a member of the Hyperborean race (Pausanias 1.18.5, 8.21.3; Hesychius, s. v. Olen).<sup>2</sup>

It was the wind Boreas himself who took such ecstatic poets to the Hyperborean world that lay just beyond the wintry passage through his cave in the Dzungian Gate. The wind is traditionally an abductor to the otherworld, for the metaphor of 'inspiration,' which in Latin literally implies 'blowing upon' (*inspirare*), existed also in Greek as *empnein*. Thus, for example, the Muses, according to Hesiod, 'breathed song into' him at the moment of his inspiration upon Mount Helicon (*Theogony* 31). So too, 'breath' was soul or *psyche*, just as in Latin it was *spiritus*.<sup>3</sup>

1. Herodotus differs from the later sources in saying that Abaris traveled carrying the arrow, unless the text is to be emended to reconcile it to the other traditions. See Reginald Walter Macan, *Herodotus* (MacMillan, New York 1895, Arno Press reprint 1973) note on 4.36.3.

The idea of traveling on a sacred arrow may imply shamanic rapture, for the word in Greek for 'arrow' (*ios*) is homonymous with 'toxin,' and

the arrow traditionally was drugged or poisoned and conveyed the metaphor of intoxication.

2. On the confusion of Lycia with the land of the Hyperboreans, see my discussion below under Lycians.

3. Bruno Snell, *The Discovery of the Mind* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1953, translated from the German of 1948, 2nd edn.) 8 ff.

The myth of Oreithyia suggests, as we might expect, that the inspired journey to the Hyperborean paradise beyond the North Wind had connotations of shamanic herbalism, for it was the 'breath' or *pneuma* of Boreas (Plato, *Phaedrus* 229c) that carried her to the otherworld while she was playing with her maiden companion, named Pharmakeia or the 'use of drugs'. The spirit thus brought Oreithyia to what was called the 'ancient garden' of Apollo amongst the Hyperboreans (Sophocles, frg. 956 Pearson). It was in that garden that the Hyperboreans would have harvested their special offering to the Delian god. What magical plants grew there in paradise?

### THE GARDEN OF APOLLO

One of those plants was the olive (Pindar, *Olympia* 3.13 ff.). Heracles was supposed to have seen it growing in the land of the Hyperboreans when he went there in pursuit of the so-called golden-antlered hind of Apollo's sister Artemis, an animal that must originally have been the reindeer, for only in that species does the female deer bear horns.<sup>1</sup> Up until then, it was said, the olive was unknown in our world. Heracles was supposed to have transplanted it to the sanctuary that he founded in honor of his divine father Zeus at Olympia, which previously had been completely treeless. Henceforth, the Hyperborean olives provided the wreathes that crowned the victorious athletes who competed in the games at Olympia.

In Delian traditions also, the olive had a sacred association with the Hyperboreans. The grave of the maidens who were the first Hyperborean ambassadors to Delos with the secret offerings was marked by an olive tree that grew upon it, in the area of the sanctuary that was set aside for the goddess Artemis (Herodotus 4.34). It was believed to be one of the oldest trees in existence (Pausanias 8.23.5), and was the object of a bizarre ritual, that dated back to the visit of Theseus upon his return trip toward Athens, after slaying the Cretan Minotaur (Hesychius, s. v. *Deliakos bomos*). Apparently, it was the custom to dance around the altar with whips, while boys, with their hands bound behind their backs placed themselves in symbolic contact with the divinity resident within the tree by biting its trunk (Callimachus, *Hymn* 4.316-324).

From these traditions, it would appear that the Hyperborean plant had connotations of the grave and ritual sacrifice, that it was, moreover, an entheogen

1. W. Ridgeway (1894) *The Legend of Heracles and the Hind with the Golden Horns* (Pindar, *Ol.* III 31), *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 37-39, 14-15.



capable of effecting the ecstatic journey to the otherworld, and that it was symbolic of the advent of the Olympian strain of religion that came to the Greek lands with the arrival of the Indo-Europeans. It was this triumph of Olympianism over the previous indigenous religions that was commemorated by the tradition that Olympia was purified and refounded by Heracles in honor of Zeus, and the athletic games that were celebrated there were thought to prove the victor's continuance in that divine heritage. Theseus's visit to Delos similarly symbolized the triumph over the primitive chthonic implications of the Cretan labyrinth.

The olive itself, however, can only be a symbolic substitute for the original Hyperborean plant, as it was before being transplanted to this world, for the olive is not native to the northern latitude of the Hyperborean homeland.<sup>1</sup> Before its transplantation, the Hyperborean plant, with the full magical character of the original entheogen, was known metaphorically as the tree upon which grew the golden apples. Although the route for the Delian offerings preserved the remembrance of an Asiatic homeland for the Hyperboreans, that land lay beyond this world, and the various entrances to the otherworld all led to the same place. Thus the Hyperboreans could also be found in the garden of the Hesperides, in the far west beyond Gibraltar, at the frontier of life and death, where the sun went down (Alcman, frg. 10 Page; Apollodorus 2 5.11), and the same Heracles who discovered the olive was said to have brought the apples back as well, from the journey that had taken him north into Hyperborean territory in quest of the magical reindeer.

There was, however, another Hyperborean plant that, like the olive, could be found in this world. This was the *daphne* (*Laurus nobilis*), a laurel or bay. Although the plant itself contains no psychoactive drug,<sup>2</sup> the Greeks considered it a symbolic entheogen. The eating of its leaves was thought to induce the mantic possession of Apollo's Delphic priestess, who, like Aristeas, became *Phoibolamptos* (Lycophron, *Alexandra* 6, 1640). Olen, with the two Hyperboreans, Pagasus and Agyieus, was supposed to have constructed the first temple of Apollo at Delphi out of branches of *daphne* that he brought with him from the valley

1. For Greece, the olive does not grow north of the plains of Thessaly. Pindar (*Olympia* 3, 13 ff.) claims that Heracles found it growing at the head-waters of the Danube, a region that was considered to lie within the territory of the Hyperboreans.

2. Dr. Albert Hofmann, in personal corre-

spondence, assures me that, despite the common knowledge that the Delphic priestess chewed the leaves of *Laurus nobilis*, the plant contains no chemically active principles that could induce her prophetic ability, nor is he aware of any other laurel with such properties.

of Tempe, the narrow passage north into the Thessalian plain (Pausanias 5.7.8; 10, 5, 7). That origin for the plant was commemorated by continuing to gather from there the leaves that were used, like those of the olive at Olympia, to weave the crowns for the athletes and musicians who were victorious in the Pythian contests (Aelian, *Varia Historia* 3.1; Argument 3 to Pindar's *Pythia*).

It was said that Apollo himself had sought refuge in Tempe with a suppliant branch of *daphne* after having slain the serpent monster Python and that he had been purified there before his return to Delphi. The *daphne* leaves for the victor's crowns were gathered in Tempe in a ritual that recalled the god's polluted sojourn there. Every ninth year, the Septerion (or Stepterion) Festival was celebrated at Delphi, coinciding originally with the performance of the Pythian contests, which were said to commemorate Apollo's victory over the Python. In the Delphic sanctuary, opposite the Portico of the Athenians, there was a level area called the threshing floor. Here a temporary structure representing a royal habitation was set up, with a table beside it. A band of youths, escorting a boy, who apparently was thought to impersonate the god, silently attacked this hut and set it afire with torches, overturning the table. They then fled immediately all the way to Tempe, where they were purified of their crime which was no less, as it was imagined, than the ritual slaughter of some kingly person, an impersonation, that is to say, of Apollo's own murder of the Python. The youths then gathered the boughs of *daphne* and carried them triumphantly back to Delphi, accompanied by the music of flutes and pipes (Plutarch, *Moralia* 293c, 418ab, 1136a; Aelian, *Varia Historia* 3.1; Pausanias 2.7.7).

Tempe was apparently considered a nearer version of the Hyperborean world, an analogue to the northern land, like the entrance to the otherworld beyond Gibraltar, and the boughs of *daphne* are a Delphic version of the Delian ritual of the secret offerings. Thus the slaughter of the Python, followed by the expiatory sojourn in Tempe, is comparable to the tradition that Apollo was banished to the Hyperboreans for a period of servitude and absolution after his murder of the one-eyed Cyclopes (Apollonius Rhodius 4.612-616). This same murder of the Cyclopes was also given as a reason for Apollo's sojourn in the service of Admetus, whose kingdom lay in the nearer Hyperborean otherworld in the region of Tempe (Euripides, *Alcestis* 1-7). The Cyclopes and the Python were both more primitive identities of Apollo himself, and thus the murders quite naturally required his own descent for a stay in the underworld.

Both the *daphne* and the olive were trees that marked the transition to the otherworld and had connotations of a death that occurred at puberty. The maiden Daphne, for example, died in the region of Tempe as she attempted

to escape the courtship of Apollo and was transformed into the plant that bears her name (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 1.452 ff.). Similarly, Hippolytus, the virgin youth who was devoted to Artemis, was said to have died when the reins of his maddened horses became entangled in the crooked branches of an olive (Pausanias 2.32.10).

The basic identity of Tempe as a Hyperborean land can also be sensed in the traditions involving both places with Apollo and wolves. Apollo himself bore the epithet Lykegenes, meaning 'born from the she-wolf',<sup>1</sup> and it was said that his mother Leto had been escorted from the Hyperboreans by wolves, herself as a she-wolf, at the time of her labor (Aristotle 580 a 17), and that after the death of Python, it was a wolf that first brought Apollo the *daphne* from Tempe (Servius, on Vergil's *Aeneid* 4.377).

The wolf was a metaphoric version of the god in his polluted state, and thus Apollo was also called Lykoktonos, as the 'one who slew the wolf' (Sophocles, *Electra* 6). The stories of Apollo's murdered victims really mask the god's sacrifice of his own primitive precedents in order to supplant them with his evolving Hellenic persona as a deity of more civilized times.<sup>2</sup> In this manner, the primitive Apollo could himself be represented as a wolf or, like Python, as a serpent (Bode, *Scriptores Rerum Mythologicorum* = Farnell 4.359 R 7n). It was as a wolf that he abducted the maiden Cyrene, like Daphne, from the region of Tempe (Servius, on Vergil's *Aeneid* 4.377), and the wolf was his special animal and a fitting sacrificial victim in his worship (Pausanias 10.14.7, scholia to Sophocles' *Electra* 6).

## LYCIANS

Amongst the god's primordial victims was a race of evil wizards called the Telchines. Originally associated primarily with the island of Rhodes, they also inhabited Argos and Crete and migrated to Lycia under the leadership of Lykos or 'wolf' and founded a temple of Apollo Lykios by the river Xanthus in south-

1. Thus, Farnell 4.114. Even in antiquity, there was an attempt to derive Lykegenes from a supposed *lyke*, meaning 'light,' and thus Apollo was associated with solar symbolism, but this is a result of the attempt to obliterate Apollo's pre-Indo-European identity. The same pattern can be seen in the explanation of his epithet of Phoibos as meaning the 'shining one,' whereas its original significance apparently designated him as the consort,

named with the name, in matrilineal fashion, of his Great Goddess, Phoibe, who was associated, not with the masculine sun, but with its feminine counterpart, the moon. See Kerenyi, *Asklepios* 90 ff. Phoibos is thus a primordial name and identity retained as an epithet of the Hellenic god, in the same manner as the epithet of Bacchus (Bakkhos) for the Hellenic Dionysus.

2. Fontenrose 470 ff.

western Asia Minor (Diodorus Siculus 5.56). Others claimed that it was actually wolves themselves who met Apollo's mother Leto when she was in labor and that it was they who brought her to the same site by the river, where she was delivered of the divine twins (Antoninus Liberalis 35). These wolves were apparently nothing other than the Telchines themselves, for one version of their origin had them metamorphosed out of Actaeon's hounds (Bergk, *Poetae Lyrici Graeci*, Leipzig 1882, 3.232). Traditionally, these hounds represented the recidivism of the domestic dog into its wild avatar, the wolf, a transformation that was effected through the agency of rabies, which was called the 'wolf-madness' or Lyssa. The Telchines, therefore, were the 'mad' or inspired ministers of the primitive Apollo. The classical god, who was supposedly born on Delos, was ritually insulated from his own recidivous tendency by prohibiting all dogs from landing or living upon the island (Strabo 2.8.6). The homeland of the god's lupine predecessor, who was born instead in Asia Minor, was named for the Telchines' deity. It was called Lycia, from the epithet of their god, Apollo Lykios, for Lycia is a Greek word and not the country's ethnic name in the native language of its inhabitants. For the Greeks, Lycia was known as the 'wolf-land.'

This wolf-land of Lycia, it would appear, was another version of the Hyperborean world, for it too was claimed as the paradisiacal garden where Apollo spent his annual sojourn (Vergil, *Aeneid* 4.143-144; Suidas *omega* 71). Thus, the Olen who brought the first *daphne* to Delphi came, as we have seen, with two Hyperborean companions, but was himself a Lycian (Pausanias 5.7.8). Apollo's name in fact, appears to be derived from that of a Hittite deity of entrances, and hence of weather and the seasons.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the cave of the Python at Delphi, which was the original site of the oracle on Parnassus, is a Hellenic importation of a religious cult from Cilicia, on the southern coast of Asia Minor, eastward beyond Lycia.<sup>2</sup>

This Corycian Cave, as it was called at Delphi, seems in fact, to have had the same name in Cilicia, as well as at its various other Anatolian locations. These caves were all considered to be entrances to the otherworld. The Delphic Corycian Cave was administered by a tribe that lived in the nearby town of Lykoreia, high on the Parnassian plateau, before they later moved further down the mountain to occupy the site of the classical Delphic sanctuary, sometime before the year 800 B.C. (Strabo 9.3.3). Lykoreia is etymologically the 'mountain

1. B. Hrozný (1936) *Les Quatre autels 'Hittites' hieroglyphiques d'Emir Ghazi et d'Eski Kışla, et les divinités Apulunas (?) et Rutas*, *Archiv Orientalni* 8, 171-199. Emmanuel Laroche, *Re-*

*cherches sur les noms des dieux Hittites* (Maissonneuve, Librairie Orientale et Americaine, Paris 1947).

2. Fontenrose 406-403.

city of the wolves,' and its original location was supposedly chosen by wolves, who led the Lykoreians there to save them from the waters of the great flood (Pausanias 10.6.2 ff.). Its founder was a certain Lykoros, the 'wolf-warder,' or, by some accounts, simply Lykos himself. Here too, we can discern the wolf as a primitive version of the god and hence the primordial enemy of the classical deity who evolved from him, for it was a Lykos who was said to have desecrated the god's temple by attempting to steal the sacred tripod upon which the oracle sat. For this reason, Lykos was stoned to death (Hippocratic Corpus 9.412 Littré; Pausanias 10.14.7; Aelian, *De Natura Animalium* 10.26).

The cave on Parnassus was apparently another passageway to the god's primordial realm amongst the Hyperboreans. The oracle there was spoken by three winged sisters who were said to become inspired by eating honeycomb (Homeric hymn 4.533-567). They were called 'bees,' a title that persisted into the classical era for the priestess of the oracle, even after the transposition of the rite to the Delphic sanctuary. This cave of the bee-maidens was said to have been the second Delphic temple, replacing the first of *daphne*, and it was reputed to have been constructed out of honeycomb and feathers by bees (Pausanias 10.5.9 ff.). Like the *daphne* temple, it too would appear to be a metaphoric substitute for the golden fruit of the otherworld, for Apollo, on usurping the site from the Python and claiming it for his own Hellenic persona, was supposed to have dispatched the honeycomb temple to the land of the Hyperboreans (Pausanias, loc. cit.; cf. Strabo 9.3.9). Whereas the classical Apollo transmitted oracles from his Olympian father, this Corycian version of the god sent up dream phantoms from the dead in the service of the Great Mother, who was Earth (Euripides, *Iphigenia in Tauris* 1259-1269; Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 1-8).

Since the Corycian Cave could be viewed as an entrance to the Hyperborean world that lay beyond its depths, the Delphians themselves were called Hyperboreans (Mnaseas, frg. 24 Müller). The cave was the way to the golden fruit. Hence, the cave itself was said to have had its chambers lined with gold, and its maiden priestesses were clothed in golden raiment (Philoxenos, frg. 14 Bergk).

It is not surprising, therefore, that the Telchines, who served the primitive god in his Lycian temple, were notorious metalsmiths, working the precious ores extracted from the chthonic depths. Their name was etymologically derived from the words for 'melting' (*texis*) and 'enchantment' (*thelxis*) (Hesychius, s. v. Telchines),<sup>1</sup> and they were apparently the Lycian version of the Cyclopes,

1. See Herter, in Pauly-Wissova, *Real-encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, s. v. Telchinen.

who were similarly subterranean smiths, as well as of the Hyperborean griffins, who dug the gold that the one-eyed Arimaspeans stole from them (Herodotus 3.116). Like the bee-maidens, the Telchines were ecstatic creatures (Nonnus, *Dionysiaca* 14.42) with a reputation for sorcery and drugs (Callimachus, frg. 6.64, Diodorus Siculus 5.55; Hesychius, s. v. Telchines). They were also herbalists, for their so-called metallurgic arts involved the making of special potions with the roots they dug from the earth (Eustathius p. 771, 60 ff.), and the single eye that characterized the Cyclopes and the Arimaspeans was known for them as the power of their evil eye (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 7.366). The classical god in killing these ancient ministers of his religion, redeemed mankind from their supposed wickedness, for, like the bee-maidens, their shamanism was chthonic. They stood accused of having sprinkled the islands of Rhodes and Cos with the waters of the underworld, thereby annihilating all life (Strabo 6.4.5).

## APOLLO

Apollo, it would appear, had two homelands, one amongst the Hyperboreans on the slopes of the Altai Mountains, and the other amongst the Lycians who tended the Corycian caves of Anatolia. This is not surprising, for in his classical form, Apollo, like the other Olympians, was actually an assimilation and reconciliation of deities from two basically different religious traditions.<sup>1</sup> One was that of the Indo-Europeans, in which male deities dominated over females and were associated with the heavens and spiritual immortality. The other was the Anatolian tradition, where there was a Great Mother goddess, associated with the earth, agriculture, the tomb, and an eternity of corporeal resurrections and deaths. In Lycia, Apollo would have been originally the lesser consort of a superior goddess, amongst a people who still in classical times alone of all men known to the Greeks reckoned lineage by matrilineal descent (Herodotus 1.173). The myth of his birth as a son of Zeus is more exactly, like that of the other children of Zeus, the story of his assimilative rebirth into his new identity as one of the Olympians, along with his former Goddess, who has been transformed into his twin sister, Artemis.

The basis for the assimilation of the 'northern' and Anatolian Apollos seems to have been that both gods were involved with oracular activity, in which they functioned as intermediaries with another world, a role that probably developed

1. For a summary of the two points of view see *book of Greek Mythology* (Dutton, New York 1959) about Apollo's origin, see H. J. Rose, *A Hand-* 135, 138.

from their supposed control over seasonal change and hence over the entrances to life and death. The shamanism of the Hyperborean Apollo, however, would have differed from that of the Lycian with regard to its orientation. To judge from Orphism, which was a classical evolution of northern Apolline traditions, the shamanism of the Indo-European Apollo was directed toward the celestial realm and strove to liberate the spirit from the body, whereas the Lycian god, through death and rebirth in the embrace of the Earth, showed the way to the body's renewal in its passage through the tomb.

It would, however, be an oversimplification to assume that the assimilation of the two religious traditions occurred solely in the Hellenic context. The Anatolian peoples may well have been influenced by their eastern and northern Indo-European neighbors before their Lycian deity confronted the Hyperborean after the migration of the Indo-Europeans into the Greek lands. So too, the myths cannot be separated clearly at all times into two distinct traditions.

The typical mythical pattern for this assimilation presents the gods of a newer Olympian generation asserting their dominance over their own avatars. Since the Indo-European immigrants were to dominate politically and impose their language, which was to become Greek, upon the indigenous peoples, the gods of this new order are characterized by the Indo-European cultural ideals of male dominance and celestial orientation, but versions of their avatars persisted into the classical period, particularly in agrarian and funereal rites, and, in various ways, the Olympians, like the people who worshipped them, had to strike an accord both with their own particular precedents and with a whole class of deposed chthonic deities, who were the children of an earlier race.

In this manner, although Apollo's predecessors were supplanted and often discredited as his evil antithesis, it was nevertheless felt necessary to appease their angered spirit by some semblance of accord and reconciliation. Thus at Delphi, the Python, who was the original deity of the Corycian Cave, continued to be honored in biennial nocturnal rites that were an atavistic regression to the times of the Hyperborean bee-maidens and their Lycian god. During these rites, the whole sanctuary fell under the dominance of Dionysus, who often functioned as the chthonic opposite of his celestial brother, while Apollo himself withdrew to his primordial home amongst his chosen people in the otherworld.

## SACRIFICE

Such acts of expiated slaughter, by which the god supplanted his predecessors, are paradigmatic of the accord with the past and its primitivism that was repeatedly renewed through the ritual of sacrifice. The victim for the offering had a role of special honor, for typically it was an animal that was felt to have some particular kinship with the deity, often being associated with the god's sinister persona.<sup>1</sup>

Although some sacrificial ceremonies required that the victim be given over totally to the deity or spirits, either through holocaust or by being simply left to rot, the sacrifice was usually a communion meal that the worshipers shared with the gods. Even in the former case, the sacrifice was meant as food that was offered to the deity whose appeasement was sought. In feeding the deity, the worshipers nourished and bound it to the persona elicited through their invocation and ritual, seeking to avert its regression to less beneficent manifestations. The sacrifice itself was a cultivated and civilized art, usually involving the act of cooking, although certain ceremonies in honor of primitive personae required the eating of the flesh raw. Ordinarily, however, the manner in which the victim was butchered and prepared for consumption was intended symbolically to reassert and strengthen the progress of evolution, for the ceremony recapitulated the supposed ontogeny of the animal itself, as well as the imagined history of the culinary arts since primitive times.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to ritualizing the manner in which mankind of necessity partakes of death in order to nourish life, the ceremony of sacrifice signified man's essential role in the reconciliation between the primitive and civilized deities and between the chthonic and Olympian realms. The chthonic gods, who presided over the tomb, were accustomed to eating the corruptible matter of life, but the Olympians ordinarily avoided pollution with the blood and flesh of mortality

1. Thus, a dog could be sacrificed to the nether goddess Hecate, a horse to Poseidon or the Winds, a goat to Dionysus, a sow to Persephone and Demeter, etc. The animal was thought to represent the form in which the deity formerly appeared and the victim was thus chosen to intensify the resemblance, as, for example, a red dog to the Latin Robigus, who was the spirit of the reddish fungus or ergot that attacks grain. So too were virgin animals appropriate to the virgin god-

esses Artemis and Athena, and black ones for the chthonic gods, but white for the celestial. The bull was a typical sacrifice to Zeus, and we can sense the god's sinister persona in the myth of his abduction of Europa, whom he possessed in the form of a bull that breathed the fragrance of the magical herb it had grazed upon.

2. Marcel Detienne, *Dionysos Slain* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 1979, translated from the French of 1977) 68 ff.



and were nourished instead upon their own special food and drink, their ambrosia and nectar,<sup>1</sup> which had the power to confer immortality even upon mortals (Pindar, *Olympia* 1.61-64) and were the reason that the Olympians were a race apart, with serum-like ichor instead of blood in their veins (Homer, *Iliad* 5.339-342). Because of this basic difference, the pure Olympians at first had little use for humans, who were created out of clay (Pausanias 10.4.4) and were closer by nature to the chthonic gods, who shared with them the traumas of birth and death. Through the communion meal of sacrifice, even the Olympians, however, were incorporated into the universal interdependency of life and death in the sources of nourishment.

Before Zeus's great reconciliation with humans and the creatures of Earth, he had originally intended to destroy mankind and he and his new hierarchy of gods were cruel and tyrannical. Pursuant of his plan, he took fire away from the volcanic forge of the subterranean smiths and hid it from humans (Hesiod, *Theogony* 561 ff.; Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 7). This fire was the magical plant of chthonic shamanism, and without it, mankind was no better than the beasts of the wilderness, eating their foods raw and lacking in all the civilizing arts (Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 436 ff.). Before Zeus could complete their destruction, however, Prometheus championed the cause of men, who were beings of his own creation, and retrieved fire for them back from the heavens so that they would not remain utterly at the disposal of the tyrannical god. Although himself born of Earth, Prometheus had at first sided with Zeus in the battle that subdued the chthonic creatures, but since Zeus would not rule with justice, it was the role of Prometheus to endure shamanic torment until he could manage to reconcile the two opposing realms and demonstrate the interdependency of both upon the intermediary lot of mankind.

In this reconciliation, chthonic fire became identified with the fire from heaven, for the chthonic smiths are also the Cyclopes who make the celestial thunderbolts of the supreme Father (Hesiod, *Theogony* 149), and thus, the magical plants of the two traditions of shamanism merge. In effecting this reconciliation, Prometheus showed Zeus the way toward justice and the evolution of a better world. In return for his own freedom, Prometheus showed Zeus that the new

1. Ambrosia is etymologically a negative formation of *brotos* or 'mortal,' and hence a designation of the nourishment of immortals. *Nektar*, which often indicates the gods' drink, may be derived similarly from *nekus* or 'corpse,' plus a second element indicating 'against.' The word

has also been interpreted as composed of an initial negative (*ne-*), plus *ktar*, which may be related to *kteres*, a synonym for *nekroi* or 'corpses' (thus, Hesychius). There is, however, no generally accepted etymology for *nektar*. See Chantraine.

order of Olympians would be eternal only if the supreme god avoided his own demise by passing on to a human the allotment of mortality that would have been his.<sup>1</sup>

In this manner, it became a human who was to bear the darker persona of the supreme Olympian, and it fell to the lot of mankind continually to reinstate the terms of the accord upon which the new order of the world depended. To the most sinister aspects of the chthonic deities, the sacrifice was typically performed at night in a pit in the ground, and the victim was often not considered an edible species and was simply left to rot. The Olympians, in contrast, were characteristically worshiped in the light of the sun, and, according to the procedure established by Prometheus, the inedible parts were burnt upon an altar for the gods, while humankind cooked and consumed the rest (Hesiod, *Theogony* 535 ff.).<sup>2</sup> In such sacrificial rituals, the magical power of fire transmuted the gods' portion into fragrant smoke, that would ascend to the heavens, where the Olympians, or the brighter aspects of the evolving chthonic gods, fed upon the destruction of their own primitive avatars. Thus they were strengthened in their separate estates, with humans as intermediaries to reinforce the advance of the Olympian age.

### THARGELIA

The offerings of first fruits were presented to Apollo toward the beginning of June, on the seventh of the month Thargelion, which was so named after these *thargela*, the still unripe samples of the coming harvest. It is at this time that we may infer that the Hyperborean offering must have also arrived at Delos, amidst the offerings of sheaves from the other Greek cities. Because of the greater distance that it had traveled, however, it is improbable that the secret offering could have been cut at its supposed Hyperborean origin that spring. The sheaf may have been added later along the route, but the special Hyperborean plant

1. Thus, the nymph Thetis, by whom Zeus would have begot his own successor, was given in marriage to Peleus, and Zeus avoided that chthonic union, for Thetis is another of the abducted Persephone-like females, and Peleus is named for 'clay' or 'mud' (*pelos*). Achilles, who is born of the union, therefore, is the bearer of Zeus's mortal potential, a mortal son of an immortal father.

2. The verb for sacrifice when directed to a celestial god was typically *thuo* (or *thyo*) and

meant basically 'to make smoke.' A different verb was used for chthonic sacrifice, *enagizo*, which implies involvement with 'pollution' and 'curse' by association with the dead. These distinctions in nomenclature and ritual for celestial and chthonic deities were not universally observed, but that is probably because it was possible to invoke the celestial aspect of a chthonic deity, like the paired Demeter and Persephone, or the more sinister persona of an Olympian.

would have to have been available earlier in the year. The arrival of all these *thargela* was the occasion for the great gathering of Ionian Greeks on Delos to celebrate their Apollo as an Olympian god with music and dance, these highest manifestations of the Hellenic culture inspired by him (Callimachus, *Hymn* 4. 300 ff.; Homeric hymn 3.146 ff.).<sup>1</sup>

During the entire period of this festival, the Greek cities were considered to be in a state of ritual purity, as befitted the god they were honoring at this Thargelia Festival. To maintain this purity, they had to avoid all contamination with blood pollution, for that would have involved them with the chthonic realm and endangered the persona of the deity they intended to invoke and nourish. Thus it was, for example, that Socrates remained so long in prison before his execution, for the Athenian ambassadors with the first fruits had already set sail for the sacred island just the day before the trial and condemnation, and during the state of purity, no public execution or blood offering could be made (Plato, *Phaedo* 58a ff.).

On the day before the Thargelia, however, as it appears to have been celebrated in the various Greek cities, the ultimate sacrifice to a chthonic deity had been made, a piacular victim 'upon whose flesh no one could feast' (Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 151). This was the offering of a human sacrifice, or, at least, the tradition of such an unspeakable offering. It is not clear from our evidence whether in the classical period this sacrifice was still enacted regularly, although both myth and archaeological finds testify to its occurrence in Minoan and later times. The human sacrificial offering may have been reserved by the classical Greeks for times of extraordinary peril, such as pestilence or war, when the more sinister aspect of the healing Apollo would need special appeasement. It is also possible that by the classical period the actual immolation had become a symbolic or token imitation. Despite our modern repugnance,<sup>2</sup> however, the ritual

1. It is unlikely that the great assembling of peoples at Delos (Homeric hymn 3.147 ff.) was separate from the Thargelia, for that would have required the mounting of two annual embassades to the sacred island. See Farnell 4.289 ff.

2. S. Eitrem and J. Fontenrose in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (s. v. Sacrifice) discount the evidence as untrustworthy, probably arising from strangers' misunderstandings of hearsay reports of rites, and they cite the piacular killing of a criminal at Marseilles and the oc-

casional slaughter of captives of war as hardly evidence for human sacrifice amongst the Greeks and Romans. It is true that a spurious work attributed to Plato (*Minos* 315 ff.) unequivocally states that human sacrifice was not the custom amongst Greeks, although it was amongst other peoples, but it is now clear that human sacrifice was once enacted amongst the Greeks also and that they maintained a remembrance of it in their mythical traditions and continued to enact various transmutations of the rite in classical times, although actual im-

was known even in classical Athens and perhaps practiced there (Aristophanes, *Knights* 1405; Lysias 6.53).

The victim was called the *pharmakós*, a scapegoat or atonement, but a word that in Greek is derived from the same root as 'drug' or *phármakon*.<sup>1</sup> A mythical tradition preserved an awareness of the obvious relationship between the two words, for a figure, personified as Pharmakos, was remembered as an ancient enemy of Apollo, another of the god's supplanted predecessors. Pharmakos was said to have incited the god's wrath by stealing his sacred drinking cups, for which reason the deity had him stoned to death (Istros, frg. 33 Jacoby; Suidas, s. v. Pharmakos). The myth is clearly aetiological for the *pharmakos* ritual, but it suggests an original controversy about the two traditions of shamanism and the magical plant.

Our earliest source for the manner of performance of this ritual at Athens is the third-century B.C. historian Istros (or Ister, as he is sometimes called), an Alexandrine pupil of Callimachus who collected information about cults and festivals in Athens during the early, mythological period. According to him two men were chosen as victims, one on behalf of the men, and the other on behalf of the women of the city (loc. cit.). We do not get further details until the third century A.D., but the similarity of the wording of the quoted material suggests that the original source was again Istros. The victim for the males, we are told, was draped with black figs, the other with white, and the two were called *subakkhoi*, a word whose etymology is unknown, probably assimilated from a pre-Hellenic language (Helladios, in Photius, *Bibliotheca* 534 Bekker). Apparently, moreover, the use of a male victim on behalf of the female populace was not always the custom, for we also hear of a pair of victims, a man and a woman (Hesychius, s. v. *pharmakoi*).

The occasion for the first offering of such *pharmakoi* was supposed to have dated back to Minoan times, when the Athenians were compelled by a plague to send seven males and seven females to die in the labyrinth at Knossos. Every year thereafter, the Athenians had sent the same tribute of human victims until they were finally released from this bloody obligation of appeasement

molation may, in most cases, have been avoided, or the victim chosen as being, for some reason, justifiably expendable.

The repugnance of modern scholarship to human sacrifice amongst the Greeks can be sensed from Wilamowitz-Möllerndorff's attempt to emend Harpocration's testimony to read two

'rams' (*arnas*) for the two 'men' (*andras*) indicated as the sacrificial victims. See Paul Stengel (1887) 'Thusiai Aspondoi,' *Hermes* 22, 647.

1. Although the etymology of *pharmakon* is not clearly established, its relationship to *pharmakos* seems assured. See H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Winter, Heidelberg 1954-1970).

when Theseus sailed as a victim to Crete and managed to slay the Minotaur. This tradition, like that of Pharmakos, similarly implies the transition from primordial to more civilized times, and Apollo, in his Delian purity as an Olympian again figures in a redemptive role, for Theseus, on his way back to Athens, transmuted the sinister and chthonic implications of the labyrinth into higher culture on the island of Delos as the intricate windings of a line-dance by the troop of victims he had rescued from the Minotaur. This was the aetiology of the first Thargelia, and the tradition was commemorated, as it was believed, by employing the very ship of Theseus, which had been preserved and perpetually restored as a precious antique, to convey the Athenian contingent to the Delian Thargelia with the city's first fruits in classical times (Plato, *Phaedo* 58a ff.).

Although the *pharmakoi* were human offerings, the manner of their immolation suggests that they were symbolic, in a broader sense, of the whole regenerative agrarian cycle. The victims, holding cheese and breads, were beaten seven times on their genitals with branches of the wild fig, squills, and other wild plants (Hipponax, frg. 7, 11 Diehl, quoted with amplification by Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 5.726; scholia to Aristophanes' *Knights* 1133). This symbolic seven-fold flagellation is reminiscent of the whipping of adolescents at the Delian olive and identifies the victim's sexuality and its relationship to primitivism and the other-world as the particular aspect of them that was offered in piacular sacrifice. The victims themselves were apparently selected for the same symbolism, for they were social and physical miscreants, chosen because of their extraordinary ugliness or low birth.

In preparation for their ordeal, they were glorified (Hipponax, frg. 13 Diehl, quoted with amplification by the scholiast to Lycophron's *Alexandra* 436), as befitted their sanctified role as the god's avatar. They were fed at public expense (Suidas, s. v. *pharmakous*) and purified by a vegetarian diet of bloodless foods, the cheese and breads that they were made to hold for the flagellation, as well as the wild fruits of the branches that were used as whips (Hipponax, frg. 9 Diehl). This appears to have been the custom also in the Greek colony of Marseilles, where the same ritual was still known in the fourth century A.D. (Servius, on Vergil's *Aeneid* 3.57). There, we are told, the victims were sumptuously maintained on such foods and luxuriously dressed.

Then, like the mythical Pharmakos, they were stoned to death, a form of execution that avoided incurring individual blood guilt. Their bodies were burnt with the wood of wild fruit trees, and their ashes were scattered to the winds, which took their spirits to the otherworld and spread their mortal remains

upon the earth to enrich and fertilize it for the new growth of cultivated plants that they, as impersonations of the wild and primitive, liberated through their deaths (Tzetzes, *Chiliades* 5.736; scholia to Aristophanes' *Knights* 1133).

The Hyperborean offerings to the Delian Thargelia appear to be a transmutation or substitution for such *pharmakos* victims. It is for this reason, no doubt, that the Hyperborean maidens who were the first ambassadors to arrive in person with the secret offerings never returned to their far-off land, but were buried on Delos within the area of the sanctuary that was sacred to Artemis (Herodotus 4.34), a signal honor that was accorded them, despite the general prohibition against all contamination with funerary custom that prevailed otherwise at the sanctuary. The myth of their simple death glosses over the tradition of what was originally their sacrifice on the sacred island and thus protects the classical god from the sinister connotations of his more primitive persona as a chthonic deity.

According to Herodotus, however, these two maidens, with their male escorts, were actually not the first visitors from the Hyperboreans. They were said to have been preceded by two other girls, a doublet variant of the other myth.<sup>1</sup> They came from the Hyperboreans by the same route and at the same time as the pregnant Leto and brought with them thank-offerings for her easy delivery of the twins, the rebirth that gave them their classical personae. They too apparently died, or were sacrificed, on Delos and were buried and honored within the sanctuary. These Hyperboreans, according to another variant, were none other than the goddess of travail herself, who came to aid Leto in her labor, and the two traditions of primitive Apolline worship are transparent in the confusion about whether this goddess of travail actually came from the 'northern' Hyperboreans or, as some claimed, from Minoan Crete and the labyrinth that had claimed the Athenian victims up until the time of Theseus's triumphant visit to the sacred island after the death of the Minotaur (Pausanias 1.18.5).

The two commemorative graves of these two groups of Hyperborean visitors to Delos were ritually honored in classical times by rites of passage, for the maiden Hyperboreans were themselves symbolically the first fruits of pubes-

1. The names of all the girls are recorded, but there are variations concerning who was in which group, probably indicating that the two separate groups are doublet variants of the same tradition. The first visitors were Arge and Opis. The second ambassadors were either a group

of three, named Oupis (a variant of Opis), Loxo and Hekaerge, or a group of two, like the first visitors, but named Hyperoche and Laodice. The names appear to be bynames or epithets of Artemis.

cence, originally offered to the chthonic persona of the god. Thus it was the custom for Delian maidens in classical times to make a substitute offering at pubescence, a lock of hair, wrapped about a spindle and placed upon the grave of the Hyperborean maidens when they themselves prepared for marriage. Similarly, pubescent males on the island would make a 'first fruit offering' of their facial hair, wrapping it about the shoot of some young plant (Callimachus, *Hymn* 4.296 ff.).

The other of these two graves on Delos, that of the Hyperboreans who aided Leto's delivery, was also honored ritually. Delian women, who, like the goddess, had given birth and passed beyond the threshold of maidenhood into matrimony, would collect the ashes from the sacrificial animals burnt upon the classical god's altar and scatter them upon the tomb of these Hyperboreans who had died so that the god could be born.

Apollo and Artemis, moreover, are frequently associated with rituals of human sacrifice in a Hyperborean context. The most interesting of these victims is Orion, who was associated with a pre-classical intoxicant, a predecessor of the Dionysian wine. Orion was the son-in-law of Oinopion, a primitive 'wine king',<sup>1</sup> who made him drunk and blinded him. Orion himself was said to have been born out of an oxhide upon which the gods Zeus, Poseidon, and Hermes had urinated, and his name was etymologically derived from this act of urination, *ourein* (Ovid, *Fasti* 5.495 ff.; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca* 13.96 ff.; Servius, on Vergil's *Aeneid* 1.535). He seems to have regained his sight through the aid of one of Hephaestus's Cyclopes and to have died at Artemis's hands when he tried to violate one of the maiden Hyperborean visitors to Delos at the time that the classical twins were born (Apollodorus 1.25-27).

Like all victims, the *pharmakos* ideally had to accept its fate. The Hyperboreans, themselves, were supposed to have enjoyed a blessed, long life, during which they too abstained from eating meat, living instead upon the fruits of trees (Hellanikos, frg. 96 Jacoby). At the end of their lives, they voluntarily offered themselves to death by jumping off a cliff (Pliny, *Natural History* 4.89; Mela 3.37). Such a leap off a cliff to one's voluntary death is well attested in Apolline ritual and mythical traditions.<sup>2</sup> Symbolically, it enacts the descent to the netherworld in the wind's embrace,<sup>3</sup> and Apollo himself was called Katai-

1. On the connotations of these mythical kings with names constructed upon the word for 'wine' (*oinos*), see C. Kerényi, *The Heroes of the Greeks* (Thames and Hudson, London 1959) 113.

2. Farnell 4.274 ff.

3. Thus Oreithyia (see p. 222) was blown to her death off a mountaintop, in the rationalized version of the myth of her abduction by Boreas to the Hyperborean garden of Apollo.

basios, as the god of the descent, although the epithet could also be interpreted in a less sinister manner as the god who oversaw the return to one's country and homeland (scholia to Euripides' *Phoenician Women* 1408).

The most famous Apolline leap was the one from the Leucadian rock, the sheer limestone cliffs on the west coast of the island of Leukas in the Ionian Sea, off the coast of Acarnania. By one account, the priests of the god threw either themselves or some sacrificial victims off the rock into the sea (Photius, s. v. *Leukates*).<sup>1</sup> This so-called 'White Rock' was a particular topographical localization of another cliff, found only in the lands of myth, at the edge of the world and reputed to be an entrance to the country of dreams, sleep, and death, the gateway where the sun went down or rose again from its repeated passage through the abyss of night (Homer, *Odyssey* 24.9 ff.).<sup>2</sup> Typically, it was a wind that snatched its victims from that rock, and the mythical leap was located elsewhere as well, wherever the boundary between consciousness and unconsciousness was felt to lie. At Cape Leukas, however, the traditional concept was defined by the purificatory ritual of an annual sacrificial leap in honor of Apollo. The leap from the Leucadian cliffs was reputed to be a cure for intoxication and madness (Anacreon, frg. 31 Page) and even the poetess Sappho was supposed to have plunged there into the sea for love of Phaon (Menander, frg. 258 Koch), who is a doublet of Phaethon and hence a mortal son of his divine father, the sun-god Helios. In the case of Euripides' Silenos, who was the leader of the satyrs or primitive Dionysian spirits, this madness was a joyous affliction caused by drinking a potent drugged wine that came originally from a northern priest of Apollo (Euripides, *Cyclops* 412; Homer, *Odyssey* 9.196 ff.),<sup>3</sup> so that, as he says, he would gladly leave his life amongst the race of Cyclopes and leap from the Leucadian rock (Euripides, *Cyclops* 264 ff.). Since Aphrodite herself was supposed to have been the first to find this famous leap as a cure for her love of Adonis (Ptolemaios Chennos, in Photius's *Bibliotheca* 152f Bekker), it is clear that the tradition of the Leucadian rock implies not only the magical herb and the shaman's rapture to the otherworld, but also the transition from primitivism to the Olympian age, for the love-goddess Aphrodite was one of the forms in which the Earth Mother was assimilated as an Olympian, and Adonis, whose name appears

1. Farnell 4.431 emends 'them' (*autous*) to 'themselves' (*hautous*), an easy emendation (requiring only a change of breathing from smooth to rough or aspirate) that supplies an otherwise absent appropriate object for the verb in this context.

2. Gregory Nagy (1973) Phaethon, Sappho's Phaon, and the White Rock of Leukas, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 77, 137-189.

3. The wine was called Maronites, after Maron, a priest of Apollo, and its extraordinary potency required twenty-fold dilution with water.



to be related to Semitic Adon or 'lord', was her dying consort, whose fate was symbolized in classical times in the withering pots of seedlings, the so-called Gardens of Adonis, that were mourned as a commemorative ritual by Greek women.<sup>1</sup>

In actual custom, each year at Leukas, it was an ancestral rite to throw some convicted criminal off the cliffs as a purificatory sacrifice to Apollo. The substitution of a criminal for the *pharmakos* victim in classical times was an appropriate transmutation of the original symbolism, for the adjudged criminality of the victim certified him as an antisocial and recidivous force within the civilized group. The god, however, was supposed to have been lenient to the sacrificial offering, who was said to sprout feathers during the descent and to be uplifted by birds, so that he would land safely in the shallow waters at the base of the cliffs (Strabo 4.5.2). We are reminded of the god's similar kindness to one of his own avatars, Kyknos, like the wolf and the Python, a primordial enemy, who used to slay pilgrims on their way to the Delphic sanctuary. Apollo turned him into the 'swan,' after which he was named, the god's own prophetic bird (Palaiphatos, *De Incredibilia* 12; Antoninus Liberalis, *Transformationes* 12.12). As part of the Leucadian rite, moreover, an ox was slaughtered and, like the human victim, not feasted upon, but left to rot and attract flies, which, after drinking the blood, were said to disappear (Aelian *De Natura Animalium* 11.8).

The White Rock, as a mythical idea, is probably just one of several attempts to locate in reality the 'White Island' of Leuke. Other topographical placements found it somewhere in the Black Sea (Pindar, *Nemea* 4.49; Euripides, *Andromache* 1262), and thus it was sometimes identified with an island lying before the estuary of the Danube, a place that became confused with the so-called Islands of the Blessed, where the gods of an earlier age presided over the souls of the departed. It was there that Kronos, the father and deposed predecessor of Zeus, was king, and like the other versions of the Hyperborean land, it was a magical garden where golden flowers grew upon resplendant trees and in the offshore shoals (Pindar, *Olympia* 2.68 ff.). The western gateway of the Hesperidean garden and the analogous Leucadian Rock thus had its antipodal counterpart in the blessed island glowing white in the light of the rising sun. It was to this eastern entrance that Orion was transported upon his death after his attempted violation of the Hyperborean maidens (Homer, *Odyssey* 5.121-124). The sacred island of Delos itself was so-called because of the way its barren coasts shone from a distance amidst the Cyclades in the light of the sun.

1. For the Adonis Festival and its botanic symbolism, see Marcel Detienne, *The Gardens of Adonis* (Humanities Press, New Jersey 1977, translated from the French edition of 1972).

## SOMA

In Vedic traditions, the White Island can also be found. There it is called Súetadvīpa, and the paradise beyond the wind appears as Uttarakurus.<sup>1</sup> This is what would be expected, for the Indo-European tradition of shamanism can be traced in the other lands to which these peoples migrated. The ambrosia and nectar upon which the Olympians feasted is a Hellenic version of what in the Aryan or Indo-Iranian context was called Soma or haoma.<sup>2</sup> This is the original identity, or at least Sanskrit name, of the magical plant that grew in the gardens of paradise and marked the gateway to the 'northern' otherworld. It is this that is the object of the hero's quest, not only in Hellenic traditions, but also in the lore of their Anatolian neighbours, and Soma is an aspect of the atavistic personae of the classical gods. The concept of this magical food reached Greece not only, as in the Hyperborean traditions, along with the tribal migrations from central Asia, but also indirectly through dissemination and assimilation amongst the different peoples and cultures of Anatolia, where it was equated to their own versions of the shaman's plant.

Although the intoxicating properties of Soma were recalled in the oral poetry of the Indo-Iranians, numerous symbolic substitutes, which were not entheogenic, were commonly employed in the ritual that centered upon the preparation and drinking of the ceremonial potion. The reason for these substitutions seems to have been that the original plant, which was to be found in the homeland of the Indo-Europeans before their various migrations and whose attributes were preserved and perpetuated in the formulaic phrases of their oral poetic traditions, was no longer easily available in their new environments and had, with the course of time, lived on chiefly in the memory of the Brahmans and priests.

So too, the magical plant of the Hyperboreans became identified in Hellenic traditions with various substances that were, in one way or another, appropriate to the religious and symbolic context, but which did not share the original's physical properties for inducing mantic inspiration. Such was the case, as we have seen, with the *daphne* at Delphi and the olive at Olympia and Delos. Both are clearly not the plant actually recalled in the traditions of the Hyperborean

1. Ken Dowden (1979) Apollon et l'esprit dans la machine: Origines, *Revue des études Grecques*, 92, 293-318.

2. Fontenrose, 430, 549, comes to this conclu-

sion on the basis of an extensive examination of the myth of the god or hero's combat with the primordial serpent monster in Mediterranean and Near-eastern cultures.

entheogen, which more poetically could also be metamorphosed into the golden fruit or flowers, subterranean honey, the Gorgon's head, or the creatures with a single eye.

It became, above all, the god's victim, to be appeased and offered in sacrifice, for the plant belonged to the wilderness that had preceded the growth and evolution of the superior Olympian age of assimilated and reconciled divinities who presided over the perfection of Hellenic culture. Thus it became also the *pharmakos* offering, either the actual giving of human lives or, as became increasingly appropriate to the god's own civilized persona, the token offering of the same. In this way, criminals were used for the annual leap at Leukas, or, as in Thessaly, the people promised each year to sacrifice 100 men, a full hecatomb, to Apollo Kataibasios and each year postponed the offering until the next (scholia to Euripides *Phoenissae* 1408). At Delphi, as we have seen, the Python was murdered again in sham. On Delos, the Hyperborean visitors were replaced by the symbolic flagellation at the sacred olive and, as elsewhere, by rites of passage at puberty, for the youthful and virgin persona has to die at adolescence to liberate the fertile adult, just as the god himself and his sister had grown to maturity only in the Hellenic age. As with their human devotees, so also in the agrarian cycle could the same token offering be made in the form of the botanic first fruits, given as piacular victims to assuage the honor of the primitive spirits who are again and again deposed in the arts of cultivation but whose chthonic beneficence is required if the crop is to grow to fruition.

### DAPHNEPHORIA

The olive and the *daphne* were coupled in the Apolline ritual of the Daphnephoria or the 'bearing of the *daphne*.' Like the ritual of the *pharmakos*, it appears to have been an annual purificatory ceremony. It was performed in Boeotia each year (Pausanias 9.10.4), with a more elaborate performance of the ceremony every ninth year, like the Delphic Septeria (Proclus, *Chrestomathia* C. 26 = Photius, *Bibliotheca* p. 321 Bekker). In this ceremony, a log of olive wood was wreathed with *daphne* and various flowers. At its top was attached a bronze sphere, from which were suspended smaller balls, arranged around 365 purple garlands that encircled the middle of the log. The bottom of the log was clothed in a saffron *krokotos*, which was an effeminate robe commonly worn by Dionysus or by his devotees at his festivals. The *krokos* blossom, from which the saffron dye was prepared, itself had associations with the *pharmakos* offering to the pre-

Olympian Apollo,<sup>1</sup> and the entire Daphnephoria effigy seems to have been intended as a token representation of the primordial god or his scapegoat.

Consistant, however, with his newer, assimilated identity, as indicated by the botanic transmutations of the *daphne* and the olive, the bronze spheres did not represent the golden fruit of the Hyperborean tree, but were interpreted instead as symbolic of the celestial universe, the sun, moon and stars, with the garlands as an enumeration of the days of their annual course.

In place of the royal victim, who seems to have been the original sacrifice,<sup>2</sup> a handsome boy of noble ancestry, touching the effigy, was led in procession by his nearest male relative, who himself carried the decorated log. The boy followed like the god, wearing a golden crown and resplendant clothing that reached to his feet. Behind him came the rest of the procession, composed of maidens, holding suppliant branches and singing hymns. In this manner, they brought the sacred *daphne* to the god's temples.

### THE SECRET OFFERING

Although, as we have seen, there were several plants associated symbolically with Apollo, the secret offering enclosed in the sheaf of wheat from the Hyperboreans was probably none of these commonly known, yet it would have had to display certain characteristics to suit the meaning of the Thargelia and the *pharmakos* offerings. Since two strains of shamanism were assimilated in the evolution of the classical god, a plant not known to the Indo-Europeans before they found it amongst the earlier Mediterranean peoples would not be a likely possibility, for although the Hyperboreans, as a metaphor, could be encountered wherever there was an entrance to the otherworld, the careful preservation of the route for the supposed transmission of the secret offering to Delos would indicate a pre-Hellenic plant originating on the forested slopes of the Altai Mountains, the 'northern' homeland of the Hyperboreans. For this reason, the olive is an unlikely candidate.

The token offerings of first fruits, moreover, were meant to liberate the coming harvest from the contamination of its own primitivism, and thus the secret offering should be characterized as the god's pre-classical avatar. The

1. In Euripides' *Ion*, the queen of Athens, the god in decidedly chthonic circumstances while gathering *krokos* blossoms.

2. Farnell 4.274 ff.

*daphne*, therefore, like the olive, would have the wrong symbolism, for they both signify the god's completed transmutation to Olympian status.

The most striking characteristic of the Hyperborean original, of course, is its properties as an entheogen. It should be a wild, northern plant, associated with Indo-European traditions, and since it was sent as a secret offering, we should expect that knowledge of its identity was restricted.

R. Gordon Wasson, working with the Sanskrit tradition of the *R̥g Veda*, has postulated that the original identity of Soma in the homeland of the Indo-Europeans before their migrations into the Indus valley and the plateau of present-day Iran was a particular species of mushroom, *Amanita muscaria*, sometimes called the 'fly-agaric' in English. As would be expected, the Hellenic branch of these same peoples brought with them into the Greek lands a remembrance of a special symbolism for the fungi in religious contexts. Wasson and his colleagues have detected it in the religion of the Eleusinian Mysteries, as well as in the rituals of viticulture and its god Dionysus. We should expect, as well, to find this same fungal symbolism in the traditions of the secret Hyperborean offering, especially since that carefully perpetuated ritual, more than any other, preserved a mythical idea of the original Indo-European homeland and its native entheogen.

A mushroom, first of all, would have the perfect symbolism for its piacular role as a *pharmakos* offering. It was a wild plant, uncultivable and belonging to the pre-agrarian, primordial world of hunter-gatherers. In the form of ergot, a fungus with fruiting bodies of the characteristic mushroom shape that is parasitic on various wild and cultivated grasses and grains, the mushroom actually blighted and poisoned the ripening harvest and was thought to pose a threat of regression for the whole evolutionary process that had yielded the edible foods and the progress of higher culture and civilization. Ergot was apparently felt to represent some aspect of Apollo's supplanted avatar, for he bore the epithet Erysibios (Strabo 13.1.64), literally the metaphor of the fungus as the reddening corruption or 'rust' (*erysibe*) upon the grain.<sup>1</sup>

1. It was an epithet that he shared with Demeter, who could be called Erysibe (*Etymologicum Gudianum* 210.25). She was the Mother Goddess in her Hellenic manifestation, assimilated to Olympian traditions as a sister of Zeus and the overseer of the cultivated grains. The same epithet also appears for Apollo in dialectal forms as Erethimios (*Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* 724) and Erythibios (Strabo 13.1.64).

If Erithios, a Cypriote epithet of the god, is also a dialectal variant (and not to be related instead to *erithos* or 'hired-servant'), there is an intriguing tradition that it was this Apollo Erithios who counseled Aphrodite to take the first sacrificial leap off the Leucadian Rock in order to assuage her yearning for Adonis (Ptolemaios Chennos, in Photios, *Bibliotheca* 152f Bekker).

This rust appears as the ingredient of a magical potion derived from a sacred tree with connotations of a fertility sacrifice and rite of pubescent passage in the mythical traditions about the seer Melampous, or 'blackfoot,' as his name implies. Melampous was the first prophet of Dionysian religion in Greece and was supposed to have learned divination from none other than Apollo himself. On the mainland near the Malaic Gulf, there was said to have been a king whose son was impotent. Melampous discerned that the boy's problem had been caused by the fact that he had witnessed a traumatic incident. He had seen his father gelding rams, and when the knife by chance had fallen close to him, he fled in terror, as well he might, for as the king's son, he was a likely candidate for the role of victim himself. The furious father, in his frustration, had thrust the knife into a sacred tree, where it had 'rusted,' the same metaphor in Greek, as in English, for the reddening corruption that also destroys iron through oxidation. Melampous was said to have cured the youth's impotency by administering a potion composed of the rust scraped from the blade (Apollodorus 1.9.12; scholia to Homer's *Odyssey* 281).

Ergot, moreover, is an entheogen, containing water-soluble alkaloids that are closely related to LSD. The Indo-European migrants would have first encountered the entheogenic ergot amongst the grain-growing peoples through whom they passed, and thus in the Greek branch as well as the Indian, one of the first surrogates for Soma would appear to have been fungal. It was used as a Hellenic substitute for Soma in the potion that was drunk by the initiates at the Greater Eleusinian Mystery in order to induce the communal shamanic experience of a descent and return from the otherworld. Its entheogenic properties, furthermore, were apparently responsible, according to mythical tradition, for the Apolline art of divination. Apollo himself was supposed to have been taught clairvoyance by a certain Glaucus (Nicander, frg. 2 Schneider), who seems to have acquired the ability when he discovered the magical properties of a wild grass, *Paspalum distichum*, a plant commonly infested with a species of ergot that, unlike the others, contains pure, uncontaminated entheogenic alkaloids.<sup>1</sup> It was supposed to grow on the Islands of the Blest, that Hyperborean paradise, where the deposed Kronos was said to have planted it, and it was responsible for the daily flight of the horses of the Sun from the White Island to the White Island (Alexander Aetolus, p. 465 Rose, quoted in Athenaeus 7.296 ff.). Glaucus was also said to have been the father of the Cumaeen Sibyl (Vergil, *Aeneid* 6.36), an Apolline prophetess, like the Delphic

1. Hofmann, *Road to Eleusis*.

Pythoness, who was abducted and cursed by the god, like another Cassandra or Daphne (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 14.130 ff.).

Ergot, however, would tend to be associated primarily with an agrarian, grain-growing people, and hence with the Lycian version of Apollo. At the Eleusinian Mystery, it had such a connotation, for it represented the domestication of the wilder fungi, just as wine, too, is a fungal cultivation yielding an entheogenic potion. At the Greater Mystery, it was the culmination of an initiation that had begun with a ceremony involving the hunt for a wild fungus or its surrogates at the Lesser Mystery, and symbolically it reconciled the Indo-European shamanic heritage with what were originally pre-Hellenic agrarian rites. Thus, it is interesting that amongst the several mythical figures who bore the name of Glaucus, there was one who was a brother of the Minotaur on Crete. He too was prophetic, and was resuscitated by a magical herb after he drowned in a vat of honey (Apollodorus 1.96 ff.). Another Glaucus was actually a Lycian in the war at Troy.

The fungus of the Hyperborean homeland, in contrast, would have come, at least so it was supposed, from the wooded slopes of the Altai Mountains, where conifers and birch abound, an environment, therefore, where *Amanita muscaria* is commonly found. Presumably, it would have fruited in the autumn and been preserved, as is usual for *Amanita*, by drying so that it could be conveyed over the long journey, wrapped in straw, to arrive on Delos in late spring along with the other offerings of first fruits. Is there anything, we must now ask, in the Apolline traditions that might suggest that this was the identity of the secret plant?

The one-eyed Arimaspeans, who, as we have seen, were either just another name for the Hyperboreans or, as a separate people, were the first intermediaries in the transmission of the subterranean gold that was mined by the griffins, are a personification of one of the attributes of Soma as the 'single eye'. So too, therefore, are the Cyclopes, whose murder as primitive surrogate occasioned Apollo's expiatory sojourn amongst the people of his 'northern' homeland. There were two versions of these Cyclopes, and the Anatolian ones probably arose from a separate dissemination of the metaphor through Asia Minor, where the later discredited Lycian Telchines display the same attribute as their evil eye. These one-eyed creatures are a variant of another attribute of Soma as the figure with a single foot, a characteristic of a supposed race of people called the Shade-foots, who came from the Indus valley and were fancifully implicated, according to the comedian Aristophanes (*Birds* 1553 ff.), in a profane celebration of the Lesser Eleusinian Mystery. It appears that the Arimaspeans may have

come from the same general region, for Herodotus's supposed Scythian etymology of their name is probably not correct, but they were really an Iranian tribe, called the Argem্পaioi or Argimpasoi.<sup>1</sup> All these fabulous creatures can be traced to fungal manifestations and testify strongly that it was some kind of mushroom, if not actually *Amanita*, that was originally the Hyperborean plant. In its Hesperidean version, the plant bears still another attribute of Soma as the 'mainstay of the sky',<sup>2</sup> which is the role that Atlas plays as 'pillar of heaven' in the west (Aeschylus, *Prometheus* 351), just as his Titanic brother in the east, Prometheus, when presented as a Shade-foot, impersonates the sacred plant as a 'parasol,' which is the Sanskrit word for 'mushroom.' The single-footed trait can also be seen in certain Greek heroes who, like Oedipus, have mythical roles as Apolline surrogates.<sup>3</sup>

It is also significant that only three mythical figures were said actually to have gone to the land of the Hyperboreans, and all three came from the region of Mycenae. These were Perseus, Heracles, and the ecstatic, fly-bitten heifer-maiden, Io, although she, unlike the other two, got only to the edge of the Hyperborean land. Melampous, who devised the rust potion, also was involved in the lore of Mycenae, and the Lycian Glaucus was a grandson of another figure, probably a doublet of Perseus,<sup>4</sup> who played a role in the same traditions. The ancient foundations of that city were supposedly built by the Cyclopes, and it was named, as it was claimed, after the 'mushroom' or *mykes* that Perseus picked at the site (Pausanias 2.16.3). The name of the city is a feminine plural, like Athens (Athenai) and Thebes (Thebai), perhaps indicating that, in fact, the word

1. Dowden, *Deux* Notes 492.

2. Wasson, *Soma* 47-48. Prometheus, Atlas's brother, is also involved with the attributes of Soma, for the divine plant is metaphorically 'fire' and is often identified with Agni, the god of fire (*Ibid.* 39 ff.). Soma is also the 'sun,' which travels repeatedly between the two tormented Titanic brothers (*Ibid.* 37-39). It is also described with the same adjective as the Sun's horses, which in Greek traditions, as we have seen, graze upon *Paspalum*, the Mediterranean transmutation of the entheogen.

3. On the botanical nature of the single-footed figure in Greek myth, see Lowell Edmunds (1981) *The Cults and the Legend of Oedipus*, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 85, 221-238.

4. This was Bellerophon, who was sent to

Lycia by king Proetus to be killed by the father of Proetus's Lycian wife. On Bellerophon as a doublet of Perseus, see Kerenyi, *Heroes* 79 ff., who points out that Bellerophon's name is a transparent epithet for the 'killer of the monster' and that only Bellerophon and Perseus rode on Perseus's magical horse Pegasus. It was Bellerophon who brought seven Lycian Cyclopes to build the fortress of Tiryns in the Mycenaean kingdom, whereas Perseus picked a mushroom at Mycenae, which was also a Cyclopean fortress.

Bellerophon, like so many other heroes, was a single-footed figure. When, like another Phaethon, he tried to ascend the heavens on his flying horse, it was driven mad by the gadfly and he fell into a thorn-bush and was thereby inflicted with his botanic stigma of lameness.



is not Indo-European, but from one of the pre-Hellenic languages. The same conclusion seems indicated by the naming of these cities in a matrilineal fashion after the patron goddesses, represented presumably by the priestesses or women of the city. It is equally significant, however, that the Indo-Europeans, in imposing their rule upon the pre-existent city, interpreted its name in terms of their own sacred plant, and probably equated the chthonic Cyclopes with their Hyperborean doubles.

Still more explicit is the depiction of Perseus's journey that we see on a fourth-century B.C. *amphora* from southern Italy.<sup>1</sup> The artist followed the tradition that confused the Hesperides and their golden fruit with the Hyperborean garden. He shows us Perseus in the far-off land as he beheads the Medusa, the primordial queen who is a manifestation of the Great Goddess to whom the Lycian god was consort. In displacing her from her former role, Perseus, as a son of the Olympian Zeus, founded the Indo-European dynasty at Mycenae. Clearly identified as the fruit of the Medusa's magical tree on the vase painting is the mushroom.

If the Hyperborean plant, then, was, by tradition at least, a mushroom, was it *Amanita*? Specific traits of *Amanita muscaria* are retained in the traditions of the Apolline surrogates. Thus, Orion had a bizarre begetting out of urine. It is perhaps significant that one of the properties of the *Amanita* entheogen is its ability to pass through the body without being entirely metabolized, a fact that was utilized in Siberian rites in modern times and that seems to persist amongst the Brahmans of India in the special healthful properties they accord to the drinking of urine. This property of *Amanita* may first have been observed, as Wasson has suggested, in the northern forests and tundra, where it is commonly known that reindeer exhibit a profound addiction for *Amanita muscaria* and for human urine, particularly if impregnated with the entheogen. Both, as the folk know, drive the herds of reindeer mad, and, in actual fact, the mushroom affects the animals in the same way as humans. Did this tradition persist in the association of the Hyperborean plant with the golden reindeer of Artemis, an animal that the classical Greeks could never have seen in their Mediterranean environment? So too, we should consider Mycenae's traditions of maddened heifers, both Io and the daughters of Proetus. It has not been determined whether *Amanita* affects cattle as it does reindeer, although the ani-

1. Pergamonmuseum, East Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Antiken-Sammlung, inv. no. F 3022. Published as plate 8 in Wasson et al., *Road to Eleusis*.

mals do eat the mushrooms.<sup>1</sup> In the Mediterranean lands, where *Amanita* cannot be expected to be found, cattle do, however, become profoundly inebriated upon the ergot of *Paspalum distichum*, the plant that Kronos sowed in the Islands of the Blessed and fed to the horses of the Sun.

The entheogen of *Amanita* also exerts a strong attraction for flies, hence the mushroom's common name of 'fly-agaric.' Flies are attracted by the mushroom's juice and rendered senseless and immobile, so that in European lore, the plant has been sometimes considered an effective means of controlling the insect. This characteristic of the plant may have determined the belief that the sacrificed victim at the Leucadian Rock was supposed to rid the populace of flies. Like the agaric, Apollo too was a 'flycatcher,' for he bore the epithet of Muiagros (Aelianus, *De Natura Animalium* 11.8).<sup>2</sup>

The color of the sacred plant in Greek traditions, moreover, appears to have fallen within the 'yellow-orange crimson-purple' part of the spectrum (Pindar, *Olympia* 6.55), a range represented botanically by the tawny juice of *Amanita* and the purple of *Claviceps purpurea* or ergot.

If it was an *Amanita* that actually arrived from the supposed Hyperboreans as their secret offering of first fruits, we can only speculate as to what would have been done with it on Delos. It may have simply been placed upon the Hyperborean grave as a commemoration of the transmuted identity of the god, something, no doubt, that would have been known by very few. It is, however, also possible that the plant figured in the functioning of the oracle on Delos, for there was one, although little is known of it and it never achieved the notoriety and esteem of the Delphic Pythoness (Homeric hymn 3.81), perhaps because on Delos, that archaic aspect of the god was so overshadowed by his Olympian presence. It would be all the more important, therefore, to have maintained some honored role for the deposed persona. It is in that context that we must understand the tradition of the secret offering.

1. Wasson, *Soma* 74-75. Metaphors of cattle are also attributes of Soma, which can be described as an 'udder' that yields the entheogenic milk and as a 'bellowing bull,' the latter being apparently also a characteristic of the mushroom that Perseus picked at Mycenae. The bull is the commonest metaphor for Soma, and this manifestation of the sacred plant may underlie the tradition that Zeus, in establishing European civilization, abducted the Anatolian Europa by appearing to her in the form

of a bull that breathed upon her the inspiration of the flower he had grazed upon.

2. Farnell, 4, reference 275b, suggests that the epithet may indicate Apollo. Muiagros is also attested for an otherwise unknown Elean god (Pliny, *Natural History* 10.75) and a 'hero' in Arcadia (Pausanias 8.26.7). It is not certain that it is, in fact, an epithet of Apollo, himself, but that is only to be expected if it indicates one of the most secret aspects of his displaced primitive persona.

REFERENCES

Citations of ancient authors mentioned in the text and notes refer to the works in the original languages. The numerical references indicate the traditional subdivisions (such as book, chapter, paragraph, verse, etc) as established by the first printed edition. It is customary for all subsequent editions and translations to preserve the same numbering, and thus, except where otherwise indicated (as in the case of fragments of lost works), any edition or translation should contain the citation. Editions of fragments usually include a concordance for previous numberings.

NOTE ON THE ESSAYS IN THIS BOOK

Chapter 1 appears here for the first time. All the other essays have been published elsewhere, as follows:

Chapter 2, also written by me, first appeared as 'Lightning-bolt and Mushrooms: an essay in early cultural exploration', a contribution to a volume entitled, '*For Roman Jakobson: Essays on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday*', published 11 October 1956, by Mouton, in The Hague. This was my first publication in ethnomycology. It now appears in revised form.

Chapter 3, by Professor Stella Kramrisch, 'The *Mahāvīra* Vessel and the Plant *Pūtika*', was published in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 95, Number 2, April-June 1975.

Chapter 4, 'The Last Meal of the Buddha', written by me, also appeared in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 102, Number 4, October-December 1982.

Chapter 5, by Jonathan Ott, appeared first in the *Harvard Botanical Museum Leaflets* in the fall of 1983, Vol. 29, No. 4.

The three Chapters 6, 7, and 8, by Professor Carl A. P. Ruck, all appeared first in the *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, Lausanne, as follows:

Mushrooms and Philosophers, 4 (1981) pp 179-205

The Wild and the Cultivated: Wine in Euripides' *Bacchae*, 5 (1982) pp 231-270

The Offerings from the Hyperboreans, 8 (1983) pp 177-207

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